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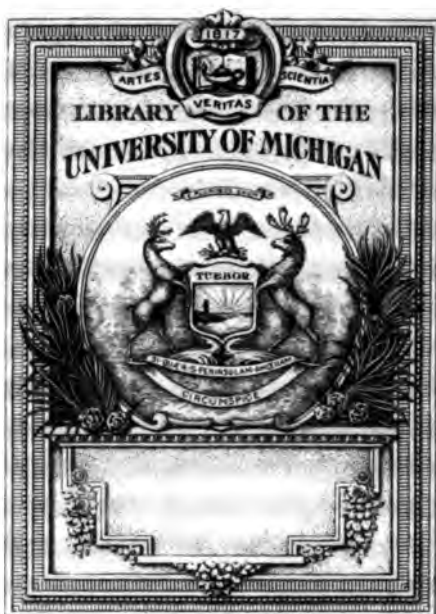
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THE GIFT OF  
Prof. Aubrey Tealdi

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A  
PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRY  
INTO  
*THE SOURCE*  
OF  
THE PLEASURES  
DERIVED FROM  
TRAGIC REPRESENTATIONS:  
FROM WHICH IS DEDUCED THE SECRET OF GIVING  
**Dramatic Interest**  
TO  
TRAGEDIES INTENDED FOR THE STAGE.  
PRECEDED BY A  
CRITICAL EXAMINATION  
OF THE  
VARIOUS THEORIES ADOPTED ON THE SUBJECT BY THE  
ENGLISH, FRENCH, AND GERMAN  
PHILOSOPHERS.

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BY M. M'DERMOT,  
AUTHOR OF "A CRITICAL DISSERTATION ON THE NATURE  
AND PRINCIPLES OF TASTE," &c.

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*Sunt lacrymæ rerum, et mentem mortalis tangunt.*—VIRGIL.

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Theodore Tilton  
12-10-24

TO MISS F. H. KELLY.

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MADAM,

THE object of the Work, to which I have the honour of prefixing your name, is to ascertain the source of the Pleasures derived from Tragic Representations, that branch of the drama in which you so eminently excel. Other names, it is true, enjoy a more fixed and established reputation than your's, that reputation which, when once established, critics dare not venture to molest ; but this reputation awaits you, and in the estimation of those who judge for themselves, and who need not the slow but certain decisions of time to confirm their judgment, you have obtained it already. Were I to inscribe this Work to any of those names, I could not pretend to exercise any judgment in doing so ; I should only travel in the footsteps of the public, and re-echo the praises which they have already abundantly enjoyed. By inscribing it to you, I exercise a judgment which I am certain will soon be confirmed by the universal suffrages of the public, and discharge, at the same time, that duty which Pope justly imposes upon all writers and critics :—

Be thou the first true merit to befriend,  
His praise is lost who waits till all commend.

Cold, indeed, must be that public, and indurated to all the finer influences, and corresponding feelings of humanity,

which cannot perceive, that, in the character of Juliet, you appear Juliet herself, in all her alternations of passion and vicissitudes of fortune, not her cold and formal representative.

But of your delineation of that character I have fully expressed my opinion in the concluding part of this work, and shall, therefore, only add, that if I neglected to avail myself of this opportunity of confirming the judgments which I there advanced, and of testifying the high opinion which I entertain of your dramatic powers, particularly in that branch of the drama which is the subject of the following pages, I should feel that I had neglected also my duty to the public.

MARTIN M'DERMOT.


## PREFACE.

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THE title page of this Work expresses, as clearly as the author could express, and, he believes, as clearly as can be expressed, its nature and object. What more then has he to say in a preface? The subject wants not to be recommended to those who delight in the softer sympathies and affections,—the melting strains, and soul-subduing influence of the Tragic Muse,—while those to whom nature has not deigned to impart those finer feelings and susceptibilities of the heart, would look upon all I could advance in its favour, as the specious eloquence of an interested author. To such indurated stoics I choose not to address myself: let them enjoy, if they are capable of enjoyment, the cold approbation of that frozen judgment which smiles at all that is humane and sympathetic in our nature, and who view them as evidences, not of our virtues and benevolence, but of our frailties and imbecility. I shall not, therefore, endeavour to convince my readers, that the subject of the following pages possesses any intrinsic merit in itself, it being useless to recommend it to one class of



readers, and unnecessary to recommend it to the other. But even those to whom the subject is naturally interesting may wish to know the merits of its execution before they undergo the toil of perusing it. If so, I must confess I see no way of enabling them to form a correct judgment. Were I to maintain, that it possesses very great merits, they would only be the more strongly inclined to suspect it had none; and were I to admit it weak and imperfect, they would readily give me credit for the assertion, and come to the same conclusion. I can therefore only say, that so far as regards my own conviction, the Source of the Pleasures, derived from Tragic Representations, the means of producing Tragic Interest, and the causes that have led to the general failure of our modern Tragedies, are more satisfactorily accounted for in the following pages than in any other work ancient or modern. Whether the public, however, shall think as I think, or imagine, that in forming this opinion, my judgment has been warped by that self-love of which authors in particular have so much difficulty of divesting themselves, I dare not venture to prophesy.



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A

PHILOSOPHICAL INQUIRY

INTO THE

SOURCE OF THE PLEASURES

DERIVED FROM

TRAGIC REPRESENTATIONS.

---

CHAP. I.

*Difficulty of the Problem proposed to be resolved.*

**W**HY Tragic Representations should produce pleasing emotions in the human breast, or, to state the question in other words, why we should delight in any thing painful, such as pictures and images of distress, is a question that has been proposed and investigated by many eminent writers and critics ; but their number hardly exceed the diversity of opinions which they have advanced on the subject. It is certain, however, that there can be only one proper answer ; for when any particular object, representation, or circumstance, invariably produces an impression of a pleasing character, this impression must obviously arise from some fixed principle

in our nature called into action by the agency of this object, representation, or circumstance. When, therefore, different causes or principles of action are assigned, they must be all founded in error except one. When I except one, I do not mean to say, that one must be right, for it is possible that all may be wrong; and it is also possible, that the true cause may never be discovered. I mean, therefore, merely to say, that there can be only one true cause, whether discovered or not; and that all other causes must necessarily be erroneous. It is easy to give an ingenious solution of a difficult problem; but though a thousand different solutions may appear plausible and specious, it is still not so easy to satisfy the mind, that the question is resolved, even by the most satisfactory of them, if it be mingled with the slightest error. Whatever is partly false will generally be found to leave the mind more or less unsatisfied, more or less doubtful: it may even have many reasons to believe what it is told;—it may perceive none for entertaining a different opinion; but still, from not perceiving its way clearly, it feels not that complete gratification which results from the discovery and clear perception of truth; for whenever truth bursts through the mists of error, it flashes instantaneous conviction upon us, and we not only perceive but feel its evidence, even though it should admit of no demonstrative certainty.

Before I investigate, however, the theories which have been adopted by my predecessors on the present subject, or offer a new one of my own, may it not be asked, whether any real pleasure arises from Tragic Representations? Some rigid theologians, whom I should be sorry to confound with divines of expanded minds, and rational virtue, tell us, that it is a pleasure arising from the depravity of our own nature, and maintain, that, while the heart is imbued with the redeeming spirit of sanctity and religion, the emotions produced by theatrical representation of every description are loathsome and offensive to us. To this argument I reply, that it rests altogether on an appeal to the feelings of a particular class of people; whereas pleasure and pain, being modifications of feeling founded in the general nature of man, it is only by consulting the *common feeling* of mankind that we can unequivocally ascertain what is pleasing or displeasing to this general nature; for, with regard to individuals, general laws have no application. Every deviation from the general nature of man is determined by a particular law of its own; and it accords neither with religion, philosophy, nor common sense, to bring forward particular laws in accounting for general effects. It will be found hereafter, however, that tragic emotions, or tragic pleasures, are more nearly allied to virtue than moralists are aware of, or, at least, than they seem

willing to believe. At the same time, we cannot be surprised, that the pleasure resulting from tragic sources should appear mysterious, and be placed among the more abstruse phenomena of human nature, when we reflect, that in all the pursuits of human life, however various and complicated they may appear to the torpid eye of slumbering intellect, and however endlessly diversified may be the causes whence they immediately spring, and by which they are influenced and determined in their career, the grand cause to which they are all subservient, and by which they are eternally governed, is the love of present, or the hope of future happiness. This original cause is made known to us, not by arguments, *a priori*, which are often found to be the mere creatures of imagination, but by actual experience, which precedes, in its evidence, all theoretical speculations.

The love of happiness is the universal cause to which we must refer all the springs and motives of human actions. Its dominion extends over all the energies, tendencies, and operations of our sensitive and intellectual nature. Those philosophers have, therefore, been led into error, who call the love of fame, the "Universal Passion;" for even he who seeks to make his name known to all the ends of the earth, and to make admiring nations acquainted with his physical powers, or intellectual might, has no object in view but the real, or, if the reader

choose to call it, the imaginary, happiness which he enjoys by anticipation at the moment, and hopes to realize at some future period. It is true, indeed, that we do not all pursue the same road to happiness; but this arises, either from adventitious circumstances, which check the original tendency of our natural propensities, or because what constitutes the happiness of one man does not constitute the happiness of another, even when fortune has pandered to all the cravings of unsatisfied desire, or submitted to all the caprice of human eccentricity. Happiness, however, under one shape or other, is the *primum mobile* of human actions. How fame, or the opinion which others entertain of our real, or supposed merits, should be productive of this happiness, the love of which is the primary cause, and the attainment of which is the final object of human actions, is a question which belongs not to our present investigation. The knowledge of the fact is sufficient for all the purposes for which it has been mentioned, and the fact cannot be controverted; for who would seek after fame unless it gave him pleasure, and what is pleasure but happiness, or one of its modifications? All our actions, then, without exception, originate from this source. The miser who abstains from the enjoyment of his wealth;—the soldier who rushes into the field of battle, and encounters danger in all its terrific and appalling aspects;—the poet who seeks inspiration



from the dull flame of his midnight lamp, while the drowsy influence of the senses obtrusively remind him that he is not all spirit and intellectual flame;—the trader who commits himself to the mercy of the winds and waves, and congeals beneath the rigour of contending elements;—the pugilist who exposes his natural limbs and body to be broken by hands which seem invigorated by nature itself for the commission of ferocious deeds, and to whose inexorable feelings the associations of pity seem to be totally unknown;—all are urged forward by one common motive,—the love of happiness; and all are in pursuit of the same object—the attainment of that happiness to which they are so ardently devoted.

As the love of happiness, then, is the prime mover of human actions; as we love nothing but what tends to promote it, and hate nothing but what tends to diminish it; would we not seem obliged by the strictest and most rigid laws of reasoning to conclude, that whatever is painful must be hateful to us, because pain is the opposite to pleasure or happiness? The conclusion, however, is disproved by the emotions produced in us by Tragic Representations; for all who have felt these emotions profess to be pleased with them; and those who have had most opportunities of feeling them, are those who delight most in renewing them frequently. Will we say, then, that Tragic representations

are not painful, and, consequently, that there is nothing mysterious in the supposed pleasure we receive? To maintain this position is only to render the subject still more mysterious than it is already; for it is a fundamental principle in criticism, that the emotions produced in us by imitations of every description, are of the same nature and character with the emotions produced by the originals from which they are copied. The only difference they admit is in the degree, not in the nature, of the emotions ;—that is, the emotion produced by the object imitated, is stronger than any emotion which can be excited by the most perfect imitation of it. “*L'impression que ces imitations font sur nous,*” says Du Bos, “*est du même genre que l'impression que l'objet même qui a été imité par le peintre, ou par le poète feroit sur nous. Mais comme l'impression que l'imitation fait n'est différente de l'impression que l'objet imité feroit qu'en ce qu'elle est moins forte, elle doit exciter dans notre ame, une passion qui ressemble à celle que l'objet imité y auroit pu exciter.*” Lord Kaimes maintains the same doctrine, in his *Elements of Criticism*, and so do all eminent writers on the imitative arts.

If, then, all imitations, as poetry, painting, dramatic representations, &c. excite emotions similar to those excited by their archetypes in nature, it follows, that Tragic representations must excite the emotions produced by real calamity and mis-

fortune, and such emotions are always found to be painful. We cannot see a person in distress without being pained at his misery ; and where the degree of wretchedness is extreme, some people cannot endure to behold its ill-fated victim. The sensation which it produces is frequently found to overpower a person of weak nerves, or extreme sensibility. As real distress is, therefore, painful, imaginary distress must be so also, because the copy and the original produce the same effect. The difficulty, then, which has perplexed the critics, consists in this, that Tragic representations produce pleasure and pain at the same moment. It is to explain this apparent mystery that so many writers have treated on the subject, and attempted to resolve this Gordian Knot ; but it will clearly appear from the following pages, that the mystery still remains, and that this Gordian Knot is as fast and complicated as ever.

## CHAP. II.

*Impossibility of forming an obscure conception of a primary Cause until it be perfectly discovered.  
Obscure ideas have no existence.*

WHEN I first reflected on the difficulty of explaining how the same sensation should be at once pleasant and painful, I consulted several works on the subject before I discovered that Hume devoted one of his Essays to the resolution of this curious phenomenon. Du Bos, Lord Kaimes, Dr. Johnson, Dr. Blair, Knight, Lessing, Schlegel, Fontenelle, and almost all the writers who have attempted to explain it, may be more properly considered critics than philosophers; or, if this distinction should appear obscure, as criticism and philosophy sometimes glide into each other, they were better qualified to distinguish between impressions, and to point out the "rainbow hues" which connect them together, than to trace these impressions, and their voluble, impalpable connectives to their original source. The common

observer perceives effects and impressions in the gross, but cannot ascertain their *momentum*, or the precise point to which they do, and beyond which they cannot extend. This is the business of the critic: his duty is to point out where propriety ends, and where absurdity begins; and, therefore, the true critic never outsteps the modesty of nature. But the philosopher, not satisfied with marking the proper boundaries that distinguish impressions, and their immediate causes from each other, seeks to trace each of them distinctly to its primary source.

As the resolution of the present problem belongs to philosophy, and not to criticism, I was not much surprised to find the writers whom I have now mentioned, in their attempts to trace the pleasure resulting from Tragic Representation to its original cause, not only contradicting each other, but contradicting those first truths or principles of reasoning, which are admitted by themselves, and by all mankind. He who contradicts first truths, however, will frequently be found to contradict himself, because he is continually admitting these truths where they serve to support his collateral or incidental arguments. That this has been the case with the writers who have treated on the present subject, will manifestly appear from the following pages. In detecting their inconsistencies and self-contradic-

tions, I observed, that they invariably arose from not sufficiently generalizing the cause of the pleasure of which they were in pursuit ; for nothing can be more easily demonstrated, than that many proximate causes co-operate in producing the pleasing emotions resulting from Tragic Representations, which no stretch or torture of reasoning can refer to any one of the causes to which these writers trace the agreeable effect. As critics, they have certainly displayed great ingenuity, penetration, and good sense ; but not one of them has viewed his object from a sufficiently elevated situation to grasp it entirely, and examine it in all its parts. From not having sufficiently generalized, therefore, the cause of Tragic Pleasure, all they have written eventually amounts to nothing. Some of them, it is true, travelled farther than others, and consequently advanced nearer to their object : but he who is within a few paces of the place of his destination, is, with regard to his object, in the same situation with him who is a thousand miles off, if he can proceed no farther. A man of seven feet high cannot, without leaping, seize, with all his efforts, a ball placed half an inch above his reach ; whereas, if he were half an inch taller, he could lay his hand upon it with ease. However trifling, therefore, half an inch may appear, the want of it baffles all the efforts of this tall man to seize the ball : it is as safe from his attempts

as from those of a dwarf. It is so in science : the philosopher, in tracing effects to causes, and consequences to premises, should pursue his chain of reasoning until he discovers the original cause of which he is in pursuit ; and he frequently fails from not adding another link to the chain, which might have led him to its discovery. Of this cause, therefore, nearly as he approached it, he knows as little as the clown who cannot comprehend the second link in the chain. However mysterious this cause may seem, it would appear simple and obvious to the philosopher the moment he discovered it, for all truths are obvious to those who perceive them ; but, not having discovered it, he does not form the remotest idea of its existence. A logical reasoner frequently arrives at conclusions, from which many incontrovertible truths might be deduced, of which he is totally ignorant, because, having his mind constantly fixed on one object, he overlooks every conclusion to which his arguments lead, except those which serve to prove the position which he seeks to demonstrate. Of these truths he is, consequently, as ignorant as he who could never discover the conclusions from which they result. Hence it follows, that however nearly we may approach the discovery of truth, we can form no conception of it, if we can approach it no nearer. We may discover, indeed, some of its appendages, but the appendages of a thing form

no part of its essence. In fact, until a truth be perfectly discovered, it is not discovered at all. If it should be said, that even he who cannot perceive the object, or the truth of which he is in search, clearly and distinctly, may still have an obscure idea of it, and consequently be better acquainted with it than he who forms no idea of it at all, I reply, that it is impossible to form an obscure idea of any thing: we either see the thing clearly, or we have no perception of it. We may, indeed, see part of an object clearly, while the rest of it is concealed in impenetrable darkness; but here there is no obscurity. Of the part which is concealed from us, we form no idea at all; for, as an idea is a mental perception of some thing, how can we perceive what is concealed from us? to say that we can, is to say that it is not concealed. We may, indeed, figure to ourselves a mental image, and call it an image of that part of the object which lies concealed; but is it not obvious, that the idea which then exists in our mind, is an idea of the image, and not of the concealed object? neither is there any thing obscure in our idea of the image, as we cannot create an image without perceiving it; for the act of creation is only known to us by the act of perception. We cannot pretend, however, that this image is an image of the object concealed, because this is to maintain, that we know what the object is; in which case, it cannot

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be concealed. If, then, we do not know what the object is, neither do we know whether the image present to our mind be an image of it or not. It may, for aught that we know, be as different from it as day is from night. There can be no obscurity, then, in our idea of that part of an object which is concealed from us, because we can form no idea of it at all: neither can there be any obscurity in our idea of that part of the object which we perceive, because perception removes all obscurity. All, then, that we perceive of the object we perceive clearly, and the part which we do not perceive clearly, we do not perceive at all; for, with regard to our perceptions, it has no existence. Besides, the part of the object which we perceive forms a complete and distinct object in our mind. It stands there by itself, for we can trace no relation or point of connexion between it and the part which is supposed to be concealed. To be able to trace such a relation, necessarily implies that we know the thing concealed; for, as we can reason only from what we know, it is impossible we can perceive relations, either between things of which we are ignorant, or between things which we know, and things of which we know nothing; for, if there be any quality in the latter similar to the former, it is a quality of which we are ignorant, simply, because we know nothing of the object in which it inheres. To say that we may perceive the

quality of an object without perceiving the object itself, is to say what no person can understand, as our idea of qualities are made known to us by the subjects in which they are perceived. Had we never seen an extended object, we could never form an idea of the quality of extension. As, then, the part of the object which we perceive, forms a clear and distinct object of itself in our minds, we have no right to consider it as part of the concealed object, but as a complete object in itself, of which complete object we have not an obscure, but a clear idea. In nature, indeed, it may form only part of an object; but this is more than we can tell, until we extend our perceptions farther, and see the part to which it is connected. If we can never see this part, neither can we ever pretend to say, that such a part exists; and, consequently, the part we see is the only part to which we can apply the words, clear or obscure, because it is the only part of which we can affirm any thing.

These observations on clear and obscure ideas, particularly apply to the writers who have treated on the primary cause of Tragic Pleasure. Neither of them has discovered the primary cause, and consequently neither of them has ever formed either a clear or obscure idea of it, because they have formed no idea of it at all. They have perceived, ~~however, many of the proximate or immediate causes by which this pleasure is produced;~~

and of these proximate causes they had consequently clear and distinct perceptions; but as these causes were mere effects resulting from the primary cause, they only saw a part of the object of which they were in pursuit, and of this part they had clear perceptions. Not being able to perceive the part which was concealed from them; it was therefore impossible for them, as I have already shewn, to form any idea of it, and, consequently, they never dreamt of its existence. The part they saw, necessarily stood in their minds for the entire of the object of which they were in pursuit, and consequently each of them substituted that secondary cause beyond which he could not travel, for the primary cause of which it was merely an effect, so that of the primary cause, they consequently knew as little as those who had never treated on the subject.

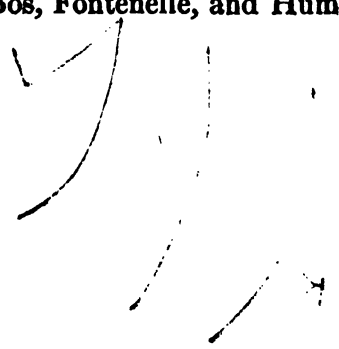
Their failure has, therefore, arisen from confining themselves to effects, instead of tracing these effects to their primary source. But, as I have already observed, the business of a critic is to watch effects with a diligent and discriminating eye, not to travel up with the philosopher to the primary causes of these effects; and the writers of whom I speak have treated this question as critics, not as philosophers.

From Hume, however, I expected a more philosophic solution of this problem, as he seldom traces

any effect to a secondary, where a primary cause can be discovered. As a critic, perhaps, he is inferior to Du Bos, Dr. Johnson, and Dr. Blair; but as a philosopher, however dangerous may be the tendency of some of his writings, he is evidently above them all. I cannot help saying, however, that his philosophy has failed him in discussing the present subject, and that the source of the pleasures resulting from Tragic Representations, has hitherto eluded the acumen of criticism, and the generalizations of philosophy. Hume has added little to what had been already written on the subject; and that little is the worst part of his "Essay on Tragedy."

What he has quoted from Du Bos and Fontenelle, is worth a thousand of the theories which he has adopted himself, but he must be allowed the merit of perceiving that their theories approached nearer to the truth than any of the rest. They are, however, imperfect, as will hereafter appear, though they have made so near an approach to the truth. As Schlegel, an eminent German critic, is the latest writer on dramatic criticism, a subject which he has treated at very considerable length; and, as he has examined and rejected the most popular theories on the source of Tragic Pleasure, and substituted one of his own, I shall first enquire into the philosophy of these theories, and of that which he has substituted in

their stead. Schlegel is the ablest commentator on Shakspeare, as Mr. Hazlett very justly observes, in his criticisms on that poet; and it would seem, that we owe these criticisms more properly to Schlegel himself, than to Mr. Hazlett; for he acknowledges, in his preface, that "some little jealousy of the national understanding was not without its share in producing the undertaking." "We were piqued" (he says) "that it should be reserved for a Foreigner to give reasons for the faith which we, English, have in Shakspeare; certainly, no writer among ourselves, has shewn such enthusiastic admiration of his genius, or the same philosophical acuteness in pointing out his characteristic excellencies." Such is the critic, with whose theory, on the source of Tragic Pleasure, I shall commence the following inquiry. After examining what he has written on the subject, and the various hypotheses which he quotes and rejects, I shall offer some observations on the theories which have been adopted by other writers. My own theory shall follow, in which I shall examine those of Du Bos, Fontenelle, and Hume.



## CHAP. III.

*Examination of Schlegel's theory, and of the various hypotheses which he has quoted on the source of Tragic Pleasure.*

TRAGIC representations, according to Schlegel, please us, either from a "feeling of the dignity of human nature, excited by the great models exhibited to us," or from "the trace of a higher order of things impressed upon the apparently irregular progress of events, and secretly revealed in them," or from "both these causes together."

Now, this is a mere assertion of the learned critic, and assertions require to be supported either by facts or by proofs. I admit, that bare, unsubstantiated assertions, resting on high authority, are considered by many readers, sufficient data for reasoning; but our credulity must range far beyond the boundaries of truth, before we can be made to believe, that two propositions which contradict each other, can both be true at the same moment, on whatever authority they may happen to rest. Now, if this hypothesis of Schlegel be disproved by himself, or if the arguments he has advanced against

other theories, be equally conclusive against his own, his theory derives no value from his authority; for if we admit it, we must reject his principles of reasoning, which, in other words, is rejecting his authority. Besides, if we reject his principles, his theory can be of no value: when our principles are erroneous, the hypotheses we rest upon them, are only castles in the air.

- The first theory examined by Schlegel, is that which makes Tragic Pleasure arise "from a comparison between the tranquillity of our own situation, and the distress to which the victims of Tragic Representation are exposed."

To this theory he objects, that when we are warmly interested in a tragedy, we never think of ourselves; and, therefore, we can enter into no comparison on the subject. Schlegel did not perceive, that this argument totally subverts his own hypothesis; for if, while we are warmly interested in the tragic pictures of distress which engage our attention, we never think of ourselves, and are totally engrossed by what passes before us, neither can we think of the abstract dignity of human nature, nor of the still more abstract providence by which the irregular progress of events is directed. If our attention to what passes before us, prevent us from thinking of ourselves, it must, certainly, prevent us from thinking of any thing else. I will readily allow, however, that we may wander, for a

moment, from the scene before us to other contemplations, but the emotions which we feel during these intervals of abstraction from the passing scene, are excited by the contemplations which engage our attention, and not by what passes on the stage, of which we must be perfectly regardless during these intellectual reveries; for the human mind is so constituted, that it cannot employ itself in the contemplation of two distinct subjects at the same moment.

No doubt, Schlegel himself frequently and insensibly glided into these reveries; and so, I believe, do all philosophic minds; but we are not all philosophers; and I believe the bulk of the audience attend only to what passes before them, and seldom revert to such abstract meditations as they suggest to a contemplative mind. Philosophers frequently err in ascribing their own thoughts and feelings to others; for though the intellectual and sentient faculties are originally constituted the same in all men, or, at least, differ only in degrees of energy; it is still certain, that particular pursuits and habits will insensibly induce peculiarities of thought and feeling; and, consequently, that the presence of the same object will suggest a different train of ideas and associations to people engaged in different pursuits, provided these pursuits require a particular application of mind. He who thinks little, will view an object just as it presents itself to him, without



reference to any other ; but he who thinks much, will view it in reference to those subjects of contemplation which generally engage his attention. If some extraordinary phenomenon be presented to a peasant, his attention is wholly arrested by the object itself, while a philosopher hardly looks upon it, when his imagination begins to rove at large over the whole circle of nature, to discover something analogous to it, so that while his eyes are fixed on the object, his mind is, perhaps, traversing the most distant regions upon earth ; or, if he find any thing in the object, that associates with celestial alliances, the expansive circle of the heavens becomes the wide theatre of his contemplations.

But do not Tragic Scenes excite innumerable feelings and reflections, besides those mentioned by Schlegel ? Is not the baseness of human nature as closely allied to them as its dignity ? And does not every new distress render its contrivers and abettors as disgraceful as it renders him by whom it is endured with fortitude, dignified and exalted ? It is certain, then, that the baseness of human nature is as closely interwoven in the texture of tragedy as its dignity, and, consequently, as liable to become the subject of our reflections. If it should be said, that the evil characters in a tragedy are not those from whom the pleasure is derived, I reply, that tragedy cannot exist where

perfect innocence and virtue alone are represented. Such a representation has no charm, excites no sympathy, communicates no pleasure. It is the imperfection and frailty, not the perfection and dignity, of human nature, that interests us most. We perceive, that the perfect man stands in no need of our assistance; and therefore we refuse to sympathize with him; we look upon him as a being different from ourselves, a being who claims a superiority over us, which we are unwilling to allow. Our pride takes the alarm, and spurning his society, we seek a communion with kindred spirits. *Pares cum paribus facile congregantur*. If we remove, then, all appearance of frailty and imperfection from the stage, we shall have no tragedy at all. Neither are the traces of a higher order of things more strongly impressed on the progress of tragic events, than the absence of those traces, and the apparent want of this order. We can find no trace of a superintending providence in many tragedies, as Shakspeare's *Romeo and Juliet*, and Lord Byron's Tragedy of the *Two Foscari*; and we are therefore apt to infer, that no such providence exists. This impression will always communicate itself to the mind, whenever a great and virtuous character continues to be persecuted to the last, and dies unable to avenge his wrongs.

There are many reflections, then, as obviously

suggested by Tragic Scenes, as those assigned by Schlegel; and why attribute our satisfaction to the one rather than to the other?

It will be easy, however, to put these sources of Tragic Pleasure to the test; for if the dignity of human nature, and the overruling Providence by which human affairs are directed, be the true source of this Pleasure, it follows, that the most interesting tragedy is that in which all the characters are dignified, and in which they prove ultimately successful; for it is only in ultimate success we can discover the traces of an overruling Providence. Such a tragedy, however, so far from being interesting, would not be tolerated on the stage, as nothing could exceed its insipidity. The interest which we take in the misfortunes of virtuous characters, would become totally extinct, if their misfortunes were not brought upon them, either by their own folly, or the machinations of evil characters; so that the baseness of human nature is as necessary to create interest as its dignity. A critic in the "Lounger," objects to the tragedy of "The Fair Penitent," that the heroine is very far from being an amiable and unexceptionable lady; upon which Mr. Knight justly remarks, that "if she had been either the one or the other, this critic would never have had an opportunity either of applauding, or of censuring her, as the play would have scarcely survived a first representation, and

certainly not have lasted to a second generation."\*

Granting, however, that a feeling of the dignity of human nature gives us more particular pleasure than any other feelings suggested by tragic scenes, it still remains to be accounted for, how this feeling continues throughout the play to affect the mind, if, according to Schlegel himself, the mind can attend only to the scene before it, and enter into no other reflections. The scene before it frequently represents the depravity of human nature, and, consequently, excites only feelings of this depravity. Perhaps it may be said, that the mind can have feelings of the dignity of human nature, and of a superintending Providence, without ever withdrawing its attention from the play, or making either the direct object of its reflections. This Schlegel denies, and therefore cannot avail himself of such an argument; but, granting for a moment that we may have such feelings, it must also be granted, that we may have *feelings of the calmness and serenity of our own situation, contrasted with the distresses to which the characters exhibited before us are exposed*. The fact is, that we can have feelings of this contrast, and likewise of the dignity of human nature, and of a superintending Providence, without ever reflecting on either, or thinking that they are the sources whence our feelings are derived.

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\* Principles of Taste, page 344-5.

A parent will feel the strongest emotions of grief for the death of his son, even when his mind is drawn away from the loss which he has endured to some immediate object of attention ; for a strong sensation will not cease the moment the mind is prevented from attending to it, so that Schlegel's objection to the feelings of contrast is not only inadmissible, but, if admitted, is as applicable to, and consequently as subversive of, his own theory, as of that which he has rejected. It is certain, however, that neither of these theories is sufficiently general, and that there are innumerable feelings of a pleasing character excited by Tragic Representations, which can be traced to neither of them.

Perhaps it may be contended, that however different the proximate causes of Tragic Pleasure may be, in appearance, they may be all traced ultimately to the "dignity of human nature." To disprove this assertion, we need only try it by the test of experience. Wherever experience can be resorted to, it precedes in its evidence all theoretical reasoning. The reluctance of lovers to part is finely and sorrowfully depicted in the following interesting scene between *Romeo* and *Juliet*. But surely no critic will pretend to trace any effect resulting from this scene to "the dignity of human nature," as no scene can give a finer illustration of human weakness, and the delusions to which it is exposed by passion, and its ideal associations.

*Jul.* Wilt thou be gone ? it is not yet near day :  
It was the nightingale, and not the lark,  
That pierced the fearful hollow of thine ear ;  
Nightly she sings on yon pomgranate tree :  
Believe me, love, it was the nightingale.

*Rom.* It was the lark, the herald of the morn,  
No nightingale : look, love, what envious streaks  
Do lace the severing clouds in yonder east :  
Night's candles are burned out, and jocund day  
Stands tip-toe on the misty mountain tops.  
I must be gone and live, or stay and die.

*Jul.* Yon light is not the day, I know it, I :  
It is some meteor that the sun exhales,  
To be to thee this night a torch bearer,  
And light thee on thy way to Mantua :  
Therefore stay yet, thou need'st not to be gone.

*Rom.* Let me be ta'en, let me be put to death ;  
I am content, so thou wilt have it so.  
I'll say yon gray is not the morning's eye,  
'Tis but the pale reflex of Cinthia's brow ;  
Nor that is not the lark, whose notes do beat  
The vaulty heavens so high above our heads :  
I have more care to stay, than will to go ;  
Come death, and welcome ! Juliet wills it so.—  
How is't, my soul ? let's talk, it is not day.

It is impossible to read these lines without feeling a mournful, pensive, melancholy pleasure ; but, as I have already observed, it is a pleasure that owes no part of its existence to a sense or feeling of the dignity of human nature.

The same may be said of Romeo's last speech

over Juliet in the tomb. The consequence, therefore, of referring the pleasure resulting from Tragic Representations to partial causes would be, that a thousand theories might be adopted on the subject, each of them equally true, and each equally erroneous. They would be equally true, so far as they reached, as there is no doubt but we are sometimes affected by the dignity of an exalted character, sometime by a secret feeling, or sense of the Providence which directs the progress of human affairs, and sometimes by contrasting our own situation with that of the characters; but then, there is as little doubt of our being affected by a thousand other causes, each of which might, according to this mode of philosophising, be made the foundation of a separate theory. We might read over these thousand theories, however, and be as wise at the end as at the beginning; for it is obvious, that they would be all equally erroneous, in making one of the causes by which we are affected, the sole and only cause of all the emotions and feelings which we experience during the performance, as a thousand other causes combine to produce the general effect, or, more properly, as each particular emotion has a particular cause of its own. To make either of these emotions the sole cause, or foundation of our pleasures, would be just as consistent, as to maintain, that any particular part of a watch, is that which causes

the regularity of its movements, and not the whole assemblage of parts, or the manner in which these parts are contrived and adjusted to each other.

It argues, therefore, little of the philosophic spirit, to maintain, that because we are at one time moved by the dignity of human nature which is displayed in one character, we are not at all moved by the baseness of human nature displayed in another ; and that the first emotion is that which continues throughout the play.

The fact is the direct contrary ; for common experience teaches us, that our feelings are always determined by the feelings of the characters who are represented on the stage, or, more philosophically speaking, by the feelings and emotions by which we suppose them influenced at the moment ; and as their feelings are always governed by the influence which the circumstances in which they are placed, exercise over their respective tempers and habits, our feelings are consequently determined by the same causes. Circumstances, however, are continually changing, and every change produces new feelings in the actors, and, consequently, in us ; for the moment we imagine any new feeling has taken possession of them, it makes a new impression (which is only another name for a new feeling) upon us. Our feelings then are continually changing, simply because the circumstances by which they are produced are



continually changing; and therefore, the number of proximate causes from which they originate, are equal to, and neither more nor less than, the number of circumstances, or change of circumstances, which are introduced into the play.

Pleasing emotions may be excited by an infinite number of causes; or, if they be finite, it is a finitude whose bounds are too ample for the still more finite career of human contemplation,—I mean that contemplation which confines itself within the limits of moral certainty. But, though the causes which produce pleasing emotions, are thus infinitely, or finitely diversified; it is still certain, that each distinct emotion requires a distinct or separate cause to produce it. If I look upon a dove, the emotion which I feel, is a distinct, individual, indivisible, though pleasing sensation, which no other being, or external object, can excite in me but the dove itself; and, therefore, this individual sensation must be ascribed to the dove alone, as its productive cause. If I look immediately after on a rose, the emotion which I feel is different and distinct from the former; but not more different, however, than the cause by which it is produced. If, while I am intent upon the rose, I happen to hear the sound of a violin, the emotion it produces, is clearly distinct from either of the former, but so also is the cause. Emotions, then, continually vary with their causes: each distinct

emotion has a different cause of its own, and each cause is sure of producing that emotion which is peculiar to itself. No two causes, different in their nature, will produce the same individual emotion, nor will any two different emotions proceed from the same individual cause. To these positions only one exception can be made, namely, where the same cause acts upon individuals, whose susceptibilities of feeling and natural propensities are originally different. In such a case, the emotion felt by each is different, but it differs not in kind, but in degree. Though two different causes, however, will never produce the same emotion in different individuals, yet the emotion produced by a thousand different causes, may agree in one common quality, namely, that of being pleasing or agreeable. The emotions produced by the dove, the rose, and the violin, were all different, and yet all were pleasing. It is obvious, then, that where a succession of pleasing emotions is felt, their proximate causes are as different, and as numerous, as the emotions themselves; and that the philosopher who would ascribe the aggregate of pleasure which he has received, to any of these causes in particular, would fall into the grossest error. No error, however, has tended to bewilder the philosophy of the human mind more than that of ascribing general effects to particular causes. A pleasing emotion cannot express an emotion of a distinct individual nature, for the

epithet pleasing, neither defines nor explains the specific nature of the emotion to which it is applied; and, therefore, he who would define any immediate feeling of which he was sensible at the moment, by calling it *pleasing*, would convey no particular idea whatever to his hearers, as ten thousand other feelings, perfectly different from it, are equally entitled to the same epithet. This epithet is applicable to all emotions, however different in their nature, and in the causes by which they are produced, provided they are neither painful nor indifferent. All, then, that can be understood from a man who tells us that he feels a pleasing emotion, is, that he feels an emotion which is neither painful nor indifferent to him; but with regard to its distinct character, the modification or degree of pleasure which it imparts, the particular manner in which it is felt, or the immediate cause by which it is produced, we know literally nothing.

To apply these observations to the pleasures that emanate from Tragic Representations, it is obvious, that we are sensible of a diversity of pleasing emotions during the progress of a good Tragedy; that every change of circumstance and situation in the *Dramatis Personæ*, in a word, every sentiment, expressed from beginning to end, produces a new impression upon us, that each new impression has a distinct cause of its own, that no one of these causes is the cause of all the other

impressions, or feelings which we experience, that the entire of the pleasure which we receive, is, in other words, only the entire of the feelings, by which we are successively affected; that as these feelings originate from different causes, so must the pleasure also; and that, consequently, he who would attribute them all to one cause, must look not to any of the particular causes by which they are produced, but to that remote, original cause, to which all the particular causes are subordinate.

It is obvious, then, that Schlegel's theory, and that which makes Tragic Pleasure arise from "a comparison between the calmness and tranquillity of our own situation, and the storms and perplexities to which the victims of passion are exposed," stand both on the same light and airy foundation. It is certain, indeed, that we can derive no pleasure from Tragic Scenes, unless we be ourselves free from all personal danger; but it does not follow, that this freedom is the cause of the agreeable effect. If such a conclusion were admitted, it would follow, by a parity of reasoning, that our being awake at the time, is the cause of the pleasure; for there is no difference between the argument of the man who says, "as we can derive no pleasure from Tragic Scenes, without being free from personal danger, *ergo*, a freedom from personal danger, is the cause of the pleasure we enjoy;" and the argument of him who says, "as we can derive no pleasure from

Tragic Distress, without being awake, *ergo*, our being awake, must, necessarily, be the cause from which it results." By a similar mode of reasoning, we might trace the pleasure to a thousand different causes ; but such unphilosophic modes of reasoning are unworthy of serious refutation.

The next theory which Schlegel discusses, is that which attributes it "to our feeling for moral improvement, which is gratified by the view of poetical justice, in the reward of the good, and the punishment of the wicked." To this theory he objects, that "poetical justice is by no means indispensable in a good tragedy : it may end with the suffering of the just, and the triumph of the wicked." The objection is just, but who would expect it to come from Schlegel. Indeed no objection shews more clearly, how blind we are to our own errors, and how clear-sighted in detecting the errors of others. He attributes a portion of the pleasure to "the trace of a higher order of things," and yet surely this trace cannot exist without poetical justice. Poetical justice, then, is necessary to support his theory, but it may be dispensed with when it serves to support the theory of another. The argument, however, though it subverts his own theory, proves the insufficiency of the hypothesis against which it is directed. Besides, the arguments which I have opposed to the two

former theories, are equally applicable to the present.

Aristotle's theory comes next in order, and is considered by Schlegel still more unsatisfactory than the former. We must say, however, that in quoting it, he does the Stagyrite injustice, for he never intended it as explanatory of the source of Tragic Pleasure. "The object of tragedy," says Aristotle, "is to purify the passions by pity and terror." But the object of tragedy is surely different from the origin of the pleasure which it imparts, for tragedy and its attendant pleasures are different in themselves; and, even if they were not, the object of a thing should never be confounded with its origin.

Whether the purification of the passions by pity and terror, be the proper and exclusive object of tragedy, is a question of a different nature; and, therefore, Schlegel superfluously observes, that, "supposing tragedy to effect this moral cure in us, it must do so by the painful feelings of terror and compassion, and it remains to be proved, how we should take a pleasure in subjecting ourselves to such an operation." Aristotle has not proposed to prove it, nor has he made the remotest allusion either to the existence or origin of the pleasure under consideration.

Schlegel comes next to examine the theory of Du Bos, who says that, "we are attracted to

theatrical representations from the want of some violent agitation, to rouse us out of the torpor of every-day life." Du Bos would seem to have borrowed this idea from Montagne, but as I intend to treat of his theory more at large in another place, I shall take no further notice of it here.

These are all the theories on the source of Tragic pleasure, treated of by Schlegel, in his "Lectures on Dramatic Criticism." As their insufficiency to account for this pleasure must appear sufficiently obvious from the preceding observations, I shall pass on, without further comment, to the other hypotheses adopted on the subject.

## CHAP. IV.

*Whether Fable operates on our Passions, by representing its events as passing in our sight, and by deluding us into a conviction of reality? And, whether this delusion, supposing it real, accounts for the Pleasures arising from Tragic Representations.*

LORD Kaimes treats at great length on the nature of our emotions and passions, and devotes a long section of seventeen pages to the emotions caused by fiction. This subject seems to have puzzled him considerably; and, in excuse for the profusion of argument which he has employed upon the occasion, and which, he acknowledges himself, "must have fatigued the reader with much dry reasoning," he tells him, that "his labour will not be fruitless, because, from that theory are derived many useful rules in Criticism." Unhappily, however, he has not said a word in this long section, but what is contained in one sentence of a previous section of the same work, where he says, that "ideas, both of memory and of speech, produce emotions of the same



kind with what are produced by an immediate view of the object, only fainter, in proportion as an idea is fainter than an original perception." This sentence contains every thing to be found in all he has written, on the emotions caused by fiction; for, throughout this section, he only seeks to shew, "that ideal presence supplies the want of real presence." It is a knowledge of this truth," he says, "that unfolds the mystery hanging about the former proposition, and shews why ideas of memory, &c. produce emotions of the same kind with what are produced by an immediate view of the object." For my part, I cannot distinguish between "ideas of memory," and "ideal presence," and I am certain no other person can, except he, who makes distinctions where there are none in nature. An idea of memory is an image which the mind forms of an absent object;—ideal presence is the same: how, then, can the latter explain the mystery of the former, as both must be equally mysterious? To say that one explains the mystery of the other, is to say neither more nor less, than that it explains its own mystery. Such language is certainly more mysterious than the things which it pretends to explain. But the mystery does not end here: what follows is infinitely more mysterious, if, indeed, we can allow one thing to be more mysterious than another. The sole object of this section is to shew, that "ideal presence," that is, the image

which we form to ourselves of something not present, produces the same emotion that the real object would if it were present ; and this, he tells us, explains why fictions produce the same emotions with real objects. Here we have again a reason without any reason, and one mystery explaining another.

That ideal presence produces, if not the same effect with real presence, at least a copy of that effect, I readily admit ;—that fictitious objects do the same I admit also : how either effect takes place I cannot tell ;—all I know is the fact, and the fact is as clear in the one case as in the other. As the former effect stands, therefore, as much in need of explanation as the latter, how can we be told, that the one explains the other, when both are equally mysterious ? we know both propositions to be true from experience ; and, consequently, it requires no arguments to convince us that both these causes are followed by both these effects ; but he who would undertake to explain to us how the effects proceed from the causes, would, instead of explaining one by the other, find it equally necessary to explain both, simply because both these causes, so far as regards the impressions they make upon us, are exactly the same. There is no difference between the emotions caused by images which we form to ourselves of real objects when absent, and those

caused by imaginary ones, because the objects in neither case are present to the mind. The mind, consequently, is totally engrossed in the contemplation of the image before it, and cannot attend to any abstract reflections on the original; and even if it did, it is obvious that the image, in both cases, receives its existence from the mind; for a real object can make no impression when it is not present; and, therefore, the image which the mind forms of it must be of its own creation. It is the same faculty of the mind that gives existence to all things whose prototypes are not present, and, consequently, all these images must be feigned or fashioned by the mind itself; so that, as far as regards the mind, ideal presence, or ideal images, are literally the same with fictitious or imaginary images, all being equally feigned or imagined by the mind. This truth is acknowledged in the very section of which I am now treating, for the author observes, that "if ideal presence be the means by which our passions are moved, it makes no difference whether the subject be a fable, or a true history;" and yet we are told in the sentence before this, that "ideal presence hath scarce ever been touched by any writer, and, however difficult in the explication, it could not be avoided in accounting for the effects produced by fiction." Had Lord Kaimes reflected a moment, he would have perceived, that it is im-

possible to treat of fiction without treating of ideal presence, as all fiction is ideal presence in the strictest sense of the expression. Consequently, Du Bos, and all writers on the subject of fiction, have treated of ideal presence, differing only in the use of the term. Except where the objects imitated are present, what are all paintings, descriptive poems, and imitations of every description, no matter whether of real or imaginary beings, but ideal images, or, in other words, portraits of those images which were *present* to the mind of the poet, painter, &c. at the time he produced them; and what is all this but ideal presence? With regard to the difficulty of explaining ideal presence, I cannot perceive to what difficulty his lordship alludes, for the entire of what he says on the subject amounts simply to this, that ideal and real presence produce similar emotions in the mind, differing only in degree; but why they do produce similar emotions he never pretends to explain. There could be no difficulty then in mentioning a fact which almost every one knows, and which so many writers have mentioned already. The entire of this section reminds me of what Dr. Johnson says, in his Rambler, of those who suffer their imagination to run away with their understanding. "Many," he says, "impose upon the world, and many upon themselves, by an appearance of severe and exemplary diligence, when they, in reality, give themselves up

to the luxury of fancy." Lord Kaimes imagines he has discovered something which no man ever dreamt of before himself, simply because he invented a new name to express an old idea ; for " ideal presence" means nothing but what is generally understood by ideal images, both being present images of absent objects. To explain, therefore, ideal images by ideal presence, is to explain one mystery by another. I do not mean to say, that either is mysterious, mystery being only a term which we apply to things which we do not understand ; but the moment we come to understand them, we no longer call them mysteries ; and even at the moment they are mysteries to us, they are obvious perceptions to others. What are now so plain as to be called truisms, would be all mysteries if we were still in the state of nature ; and what are at this moment mysteries to the unlettered part of mankind, are truisms to the literary world. It is not things that are mysterious, but we that are ignorant. I do not mean, therefore, to assert, that either ideal images or ideal presence are mysterious : I only mean to say, that both are the same, and, consequently, that he who regards one of them as mysterious, should look upon the other as a mystery also.

Granting, however, that the doctrine of " ideal presence" explains what it pretends to explain, the pleasure resulting from Tragic Representations

remain still as mysterious as ever. To say that fiction pleases us, because the reality pleases us, explains nothing, for the question still remains, why does the reality please? Until we are told why real distress pleases, why we take pleasure in witnessing a shipwreck, an execution, &c. we gain little by knowing that the imitation of these distresses pleases us because their originals do.

Besides, it should be recollected, that no person derives pleasure from supposing Tragic Representations to be real, simply because every one knows they are not real : all we expect from such representations, is, that they give a correct and natural imitation of the passions, circumstances, and events which they represent; for, however exact the imitation may be, we still know it is but an imitation. Lord Kaimes, therefore, leaves the question where he found it, so that we must seek elsewhere for the source of the pleasures of which we are in pursuit.

As he claims, however, the merit of originality in all that he has written on this subject, it is but doing justice to Locke and Du Bos to say, that the whole of it is taken from them. Locke distinctly observes, that an idea of reflection, or memory, produces the same impression upon the mind with the real object which it represents to itself, with this difference, that the latter impression is fainter than the former; and Du Bos has the same doctrine in other words, "*La copie*

*de l'objet,"* he says, "*doit, pour ainsi dire, exciter en nous une copie de la passion que l'objet y auroit excitée.*" To this doctrine Lord Kaimes has not added a single idea, though he wishes to make us believe that his doctrine is all his own, because he has expressed this idea in other words. Neither is he very accurate in saying that an "*idea* is fainter than an original *perception*," for this is saying, in other words, that an idea is fainter than an idea, as perception is an idea in the strict and original acceptation of the term, coming from the Greek verb *uideo*, to see. It therefore more properly expresses an original perception than a reflex act of the mind; but, as it is used to express both, we naturally divide ideas into two branches, namely, ideas of sensation, and ideas of reflection. He should therefore have said that an idea of reflection, or of memory, is fainter than an idea of sensation or actual presence.

## CHAP. V.

*Whether Tragic Pleasures may be traced to the Vices and Inhumanity, or to the Virtues and Sympathies, of Human Nature.*

THE doctrine of Helvetius, on the source of Tragic Pleasure, is not very "*refreshing*." It holds out a gloomy prospect of our original nature, and, consequently, of our final destination. Man, according to him, is naturally cruel. "What does the prospect of nature," he says, "present to us? A multitude of beings destined to devour each other. Man, in particular, say the anatomists, has the tooth of a carnivorous animal. He ought, therefore, to be voracious, and, consequently, cruel and bloody. Flesh, moreover, is his most wholesome nourishment, and the most conformable to his organization. His preservation, like that of almost all other animals, is connected with the destruction of others."

"If the stag at bay affect me;—if his tears excite mine, this object, so affecting by its novelty,



is agreeable to the savage, whom habit has rendered obdurate.

“Let me not be accused of denying the existence of good men. I know there are such, who tenderly sympathize in the miseries of their fellow creatures; but the humanity of these is the effect of their education, not their nature. Had these men been born among the Iroquois, they would have adopted their barbarous customs.

“Who is, in all society, the man most detestable? The man of nature, who having no convention with his fellows, obeys nothing but his caprice, and the present sentiment with which he is possessed.

“We see children enclose chafers and hornbeetles in hot wax, then dress them up like soldiers, and thus prolong their misery for two or three months. It is vain to say, that these children do not reflect upon the pain those insects feel. If the sentiment of compassion was as natural to them as that of fear, they would be sensible of the sufferings of the insect, in the same manner as fear makes them sensible of danger from a ferocious animal.”

Such are the views which Helvetius takes of human nature; whence he concludes, that the delight we take in executions, Tragic Representations, &c. arise from our propensity to cruelty. He argues, that curiosity can have no share in producing this pleasure, from our propensity to

renew it. Curiosity, he admits, may account for our witnessing an execution the first time, but he denies that it will account for our witnessing it a second.

I should hardly have quoted Helvetius' theory on the cause of Tragic Pleasure, were it not, that it gives me an opportunity of vindicating human nature from the aspersions of so gloomy and ill-boding a moralist. If, therefore, it should lead me into a short digression from the direct object of discussion, the importance of the subject is the only excuse which I can offer the reader.

Man, he says, ought to be cruel and bloody, because nature has given him the tooth of a carnivorous animal. This is obviously to maintain, that man is born with a natural propensity to bloodshed and cruelty, that he possesses this propensity in his cradle, antecedent to education, and the influence of circumstances ; and, consequently, that neither education nor circumstances have any share whatever in its production, nor in the production of the teeth which fits him so admirably to indulge it. Neither man, nor any other animal, however, can be born with and without natural propensities, at the same time ; and, therefore, he who asserts, that nature has given him a propensity for cruelty, denies that he is born without natural propensities. Helvetius, consequently, must deny it ; and yet the sole object of his

*Essay on Man*, the work from which I have made these extracts, is to shew the necessity of a good education, by proving, that man is born without any natural propensities whatever, that he is solely the creature of circumstances and education, and that, of himself, he is neither inclined to good or evil, to vice or virtue. "No individual," he says, "is born *good* or *bad*, men are the one or the other, according as a similar or opposite interest unites or divides them. At the moment the child is delivered from the womb of its mother, and opens the gates of life, he enters it without ideas and without passions." In a word, he sets out with this principle, that "the talents and virtues of each individual is the effect of education, and not of organization." As education, then, has nothing to do with the organization of the teeth, and as all propensities must be traced to education, and adventitious circumstances, Helvetius flatly contradicts himself, and subverts his whole theory, by concluding, from this organization, that man is born with a natural propensity for cruelty; for, this is to admit, that we have propensities that can be traced to nature alone, and over which education can exercise no controul.

That "the stag at bay is agreeable to the savage whom habit has rendered obdurate," I admit; but this does not prove an original propensity to cruelty. What is caused by "*habit*," cannot be traced

to nature; on the contrary, the "obduracy" that arises from "*habit*," cannot be born with us, because, natural propensities manifest themselves without any assistance from habit. Habit may ultimately eradicate, but can never create, natural propensities, and what it substitutes in their stead, cannot, consequently, be referred to our original constitution, or natural propensities.

"The humanity of good men," he observes, "is the effect of their education, not their nature." I deny the assertion. Education can never succeed in establishing doctrines, or creating passions, that are not antecedently natural to us. Neither the worst system of education, nor the most superstitious religion, can entirely extinguish the moral sense within us,—that sense of which Helvetius says, he has "no more idea than of a moral castle or elephant." I am aware it is possible to obscure our ideas of right and wrong, to throw an atmosphere of intellectual darkness over the native perspicuity of the mind, to cloud the prospects which allure us forward, and gleam with the virgin dawn of mental illumination, to silence the still voice which whispers to us that we are intended to move in a higher sphere, and to enchain the energies which prompt us to attain it. But even in this state, it is impossible to extinguish entirely the moral sense, to make us believe that malignity, falsehood, despotism, treachery, perfidy, robbery,

and assassination are virtues of the highest order, and fidelity, philanthropy, honesty, and truth, vices of the blackest dye. No education, I say, can succeed in convincing us of the truth of this doctrine, which would not be the case, if we had no feelings of humanity, none of right and wrong, antecedent to education. The mind runs readily along the path which is natural and agreeable to its original constitution, but whenever it is driven out of it, it feels itself also out of its native element, and has a constant tendency to revert to the path from which it has been diverted. Hence it is, that while all good men, without exception, whether learned or ignorant, feel they are right in preferring virtue to vice, and truth to falsehood, not one out of a thousand bad men feels he is right in renouncing virtue, and devoting himself to the pursuits of iniquity. In a word, all mankind, for the exceptions are not worth taking into consideration, admit the baseness of vice, and the dignity of virtue, and so they have done from time immemorial. Now, if it be education that taught them this doctrine originally, I should wish to know from whom they received this education? No person, I suppose, will deny that it was instituted by themselves, and consequently the precepts they originally taught must have been those which were most agreeable to their natural feelings and ideas. Education, consequently, could never have transmitted to us the

doctrine, that virtue is preferable to vice, and humanity to barbarity, if humanity and virtue were not originally, and antecedent to all education, more natural to us than vice and cruelty. Instead, therefore, of saying with Helvetius, that the humanity and virtues of good men are the effects of education, we should rather say, that the education which inculcates and approves of these virtuous affections of the soul, is the effect of that original humanity, and propensity to virtue, which Nature originally implanted in the breast of man. The fact is, that Helvetius is eternally at variance with himself on this subject. In talking of the cruelty of children to insects, he says, "if the sentiment of compassion was as natural to them as fear, &c." Without prolonging quotations, I shall only observe, that if the sentiment of compassion be not *as natural* to us as that of fear, it follows, that some sentiments are more natural to us than others; and if so, all that Helvetius has written upon man, and upon the human mind, is not worth a rush, because both works are founded on the principle, that all our feelings, sentiments, passions, notions, ideas, &c. are acquired, that they result from education, and that nature has no share in their production. According to this doctrine, it is obvious, that one feeling or passion cannot be more natural than another, as all of them arise, not from nature, but from education and acciden-

tal circumstances. When Helvetius asserts, that the sentiment of fear is more natural than that of compassion, he admits, that there are natural as well as acquired sentiments, and consequently he proves, that while he was writing his "*Essay on Man*," he was only building castles in the air, his whole theory being founded on the opposite doctrine.

Helvetius, then, has failed in proving the natural cruelty of man, and if he even could prove it, he would prove, at the same time, that his theory of man was all founded in error, as it entirely rests on the exclusion of all natural passions and propensities. The pleasures arising from Tragic Representations, executions, &c., cannot, therefore, arise from our natural love of cruelty. Of this, if we have still any remaining doubt, the following reflection must serve to convince us. The reflection I am going to make is one that must derive additional value from the opportunity which every person has of proving its truth. Does not every person feel within himself, that however much he may be pleased in beholding an execution, or any other scene of affliction, he would be infinitely more delighted at being able to rescue the victim of distress from his sufferings, or from the danger to which he is immediately exposed? Who feels the most exquisite happiness, he who saves a drowning man at the risk of his own life, or he who, by pushing him back into the fatal element, puts an end to

his existence? It requires not the genius of a Helvetius to answer this question. Every one knows that whilst the former enjoys the most heart-felt satisfaction, the latter is torn with remorse, and the pangs of a guilty conscience, if he retain any thing of human nature in him; and if not, he is no man, and the philosophy of human nature is not applicable to him.

I dare do all that may become a man :  
Who dares do more is none.

Here, then, we have a demonstrative certainty, that man, so far from being naturally cruel, is naturally a detester, an abominator of cruelty; and that so far from approving of it in others, he cannot reflect upon any cruel act of his own without self-reprobation, and the stings of a guilty conscience. These are stings which he could never feel, if cruelty were as natural to him as compassion. Will it be said that these stings of conscience arise from education,—from his being taught that cruelty is a sin, and compassion a virtue? If so, an opposite education would necessarily produce an opposite effect, so that if he were taught to believe, that compassion is a sin, and cruelty a virtue, he would feel the same pangs of conscience, whenever he saved a man from death, or any other good act which education taught him to be a crime.

Now, if any instance could be produced of a man suffering under the stings of conscience for saving



a man's life, or doing any other good and virtuous act, I should not hesitate to acknowledge the force of education, and the absurdity of believing in any original, natural propensities ; but as these are stings of conscience which I never heard of, which I never read of, and which I believe no person ever felt, I am necessarily driven to conclude, whether I will or will not, that compassion and virtuous propensities are agreeable to the original nature of man, and that no man ever was tormented by remorse of conscience for having yielded to them. While I held this doctrine, I am equally driven to believe, that cruelty and vice are abhorrent from the nature of man, and that he who has so completely extinguished every opposite principle as to delight in them, and hate every man to whom they are dear, is not a man, but a monster.

If virtue and compassion, then, be natural to man, Helvetius' theory on the source of the delight which we derive from Tragic Representations, must necessarily fall to the ground. It is not only more superficial than any of the other theories which I have already examined, but the principles on which it is founded are impious and detestable.

From Helvetius we naturally come to examine a theory of a very opposite nature, a theory, not only refreshing, but pregnant with the brightest visions that ever wanted in the vistas of hope, or ever threw the radiance of their splendour over

the creations of imagination, or the associations of poetry. There is a glow of inspiration which the mind is unwilling to resist, a sacred enthusiasm that lifts the soul above its ordinary level, whenever it can discern any connexion between human and divine affairs,—whenever it can trace any propensity of our nature to the laws of an eternal, and over-ruling Providence. At such a moment, we spurn the gross controul of material existence, or embrace it only, because it serves as an approach to that more perfect state, which is the summit of all our attainments. When we are under this impression,

Grace shines around us with serenest beams,  
And whispering angels prompt us golden dreams,  
For us th' unfading rose of Eden blooms,  
And wings of seraphs shed divine perfumes.

What could be the enthusiasm of a Helvetius, who denied the original goodness of man; of a Voltaire, who insisted on the materiality of his nature; of a Lucretius, who never suffered his muse to soar beyond the narrow precincts of sensible existence; of a Hume, who swept away the material and spiritual world with one dash of his pen, and suffered nothing to exist but ideas and images, those “shadowy shapes,” which “lift the unreal scene;” in a word, of any man, who confines his hopes and expectations to the narrow span of sublunary existence? To what purpose is this boasted education which Helvetius advocates, if its influence extend not beyond the grave?

The theory which I am now about to examine, opens to us a happier and a brighter prospect, and dispels the turbid gloom of somniferous scepticism.

The pain arising from virtuous emotions, is, according to Akenside, always attended with pleasure; and to this virtuous propensity he traces the pleasure resulting from scenes of Tragic distress. It is a theory directly opposed to that of Helvetius, and, though already well known to every English reader, I shall give it in his own words.

Behold the ways

Of heaven's eternal destiny to man ;—  
 For ever just, benevolent, and wise :  
 That virtue's awful steps, howe'er pursued  
 By vexing fortune and obtrusive pain,  
 Should never be divided from her chaste,  
 Her fair attendant, Pleasure. Need I urge  
 Thy tardy thought through all the various round  
 Of this existence, that thy softening soul  
 At length may learn what energy the hand  
 Of virtue mingles in the bitter tide  
 Of passion swelling with distress and pain,  
*To mitigate the sharp with gracious drops*  
*Of cordial Pleasure.* Ask the faithful youth,  
 Why the cold urn of her whom long he loved  
 So often fills his arms ; so often draws  
 His lonely footsteps, at the silent hour,  
 To pay the mournful tribute of his tears ?  
 O ! he will tell thee, that the wealth of worlds  
 Should ne'er seduce his bosom to forego

That sacred hour, when stealing from the noise  
 Of care and envy, sweet remembrance soothes,  
 With virtue's kindest looks, his aching breast,  
*And turns his tears to rapture.*—Ask the crowd  
 Which flies impatient from the village walk  
 To climb the neighbouring cliffs, when far below  
 The cruel winds have hurled upon the coast  
 Some hopeless bark ; while sacred pity melts  
 The general eye, or terror's icy hand  
 Smites their distorted limbs, and horrent hair ;  
 While every mother closer to her breast  
 Catches her child, and pointing where the waves  
 Foam through the shattered vessel, shrieks aloud  
 As one poor wretch, that spreads his piteous arms  
 For succour, swallowed by the roaring surge,  
 As now another, dashed against the rock,  
 Drops lifeless down : O ! deemest thou, indeed,  
*No kind endearment here by nature given*  
*To mutual terror, and compassion's tears ?*  
*No sweetly melting softness which attracts,*  
*O'er all that edge of pain,* the social powers  
 To this, their proper action, and their end ?  
 Ask thy own heart, when, at the midnight hour,  
 Slow through the studious gloom, thy pausing eye,  
 Led by the glimmering taper, moves around  
 The sacred volume of the dead, the songs  
 Of Grecian bards, and records writ by fame  
 For Grecian heroes —————

————— When the pious band  
 Of youths that fought for freedom, and their sires,  
 Lie side by side in gore ;—when ruffian pride  
 Usurps the throne of justice ;—turns the pomp  
 Of public power, the majesty of rule,  
 The sword, the laurel, and the purple robe,  
 To slavish, empty pageants, to adorn

A tyrant's walk, and glitter in the eyes  
 Of such as bow the knee ;—when honoured urns  
 Of patriots and of chiefs, the awful bust,  
 And storied arch, to glut the coward age  
 Of regal envy, strew the public way  
 With hallowed ruins ! —————

————— When the patriot's tear  
 Starts from thine eye, and thy extended arm,  
 In fancy hurls the thunderbolt of Jove,  
 To fire the impious wreath on Philip's brow,  
 Or dash Octavius from the trophied car ;—  
*Say does thy secret soul repine to taste*  
*The big distress ;—or would'st thou then exchange*  
 Those heart-ennobling sorrows for the lot  
 Of him who sits among the gaudy herd  
 Of mute barbarians bending to his nod  
 And bears aloft his gold invested front,  
 And says within himself, " I am a king,  
 And wherefore should the clamorous voice of woe  
 Intrude upon mine ear ?"

This theory, which makes Tragic pleasure arise from the influence of virtuous impressions, is not only more general, and more philosophic than all the theories which we have yet noticed, but it is also the most pleasing which human imagination can conceive, as it is the only one which vindicates the original dignity and immortal destination of man. Nor is it less pleasing to find that we are indebted for this theory to the inspirations of the muse. It has poets chiefly for its advocates, and these, too, of no inferior order. Pope and Young have philosophically and poetically breathed the

same sentiments, and maintained the same doctrine. Before I examine its sufficiency to account for the origin of Tragic Pleasure, I shall quote a few lines on the subject from each of these poets ; and first from Young.

Though various are the tempers of mankind,  
Pleasure's gay family holds all in chains.  
Some most affect the black, and some the fair ;  
Whatever the motive, pleasure is the mark :  
For her the black assassin draws the sword ;  
For her dark statesmen trim the midnight lamp,  
To which no single sacrifice may fall.  
The stoic proud, for pleasure, pleasure scorned ;  
For her Affliction's daughters *grief indulge*  
*And find, or hope a luxury in tears.*

Patron of pleasure ! I thy rival am ;—  
Pleasure the purpose of my gloomy song :  
*Pleasure is nought but virtues gayer name ;—*  
I wrong her still, I rate her worth too low :  
*Virtue the root, and pleasure is the flower.*

\* \* \* \* \*

For what are virtues, (formidable name !)  
What but the *fountain or defence of joy ?*

The following is from Pope.

Know then this truth, (enough for man to know,) *Virtue alone is happiness below.*  
The only point where human bliss stands still,  
And tastes the good without the fall to ill.  
The broadest mirth, unfeeling folly wears,  
*Less pleasing far than virtue's very tears.*  
See the sole bliss heaven could on man bestow,  
Which who but feels can taste, but thinks can know ;

Yet, poor with fortune, and with learning blind,  
The bad must miss, the good, untaught, will find.

That every virtuous impression is pleasing to the soul, however it may be accompanied by pains and sorrows, is a truth which no sophistry can disprove, and to which every virtuous mind can afford instant testimony. To call upon others to confirm the fact would be absurd, because no man can feel a virtuous impression but the virtuous man himself; and, consequently, no other can tell whether it be pleasing or otherwise. We can reason only from what we know, and he who never felt a virtuous impression, knows, consequently, nothing about it. The ill-boding sceptic who denies the original goodness of human nature, and who acknowledges that he has no more idea of "a moral sense than of a moral castle," is, consequently, a stranger to virtuous emotions, and unqualified to reason about them, or tell whether they are agreeable or disagreeable, because pleasure is known only by being felt.

So far then as regards virtuous impressions, no question can remain of their being all pleasing to the soul, whether they arise from Tragic Representations or not; but there still remain unanswerable objections to the theory which resolves all our pleasures, or even those arising from Tragic Representations, into a sense of virtue. In the first place, there are many sensations and emotions

which are always pleasing, though they have not the remotest alliance with virtue,—such as the pleasure derived from comic scenes, and, consequently, virtue cannot be the general law of pleasure.

We cannot therefore maintain, that Tragic emotions are pleasing because they are virtuous; for if some pleasing emotions be not virtuous, it may happen that Tragic emotions may be among the number. Now it happens, that there are an infinity of pleasing emotions besides those of comedy, which have not the most distant connexion with virtuous affections; and it also happens, that some portion of the pleasure arising from Tragic Representations can be clearly traced to this class of pleasing emotions. All good imitations are pleasing to us whether they represent real objects or real circumstances and events. To imitate the realities of life correctly and naturally, requires great ingenuity, and a peculiar appropriation of the mental powers; but genius and energy of mind have no original connexion with virtue. The greatest poet is not the greatest saint; nor is the greatest saint the most intelligent of the human race. Men of the greatest genius have been found to deny every principle of morality, and, consequently, every principle of religion on which virtue can rest; but yet it is genius, and genius only, whether it be sanctified or reprobate, that can ever



succeed in giving a correct imitation of nature. When we are pleased with this imitation, therefore, it is not the virtue but the genius of the artist that communicates the pleasure. A painting or a poem badly executed is despised, however we may venerate the virtues of the person who produced it; so that I may safely venture to assert, that the pleasure resulting from imitation, as imitation, has not the remotest alliance with virtuous impressions of any kind, and, consequently, cannot be placed among the pleasures resulting from virtue. Now it cannot be denied that a part of the pleasures arising from Tragic Representations, is owing to pure imitation alone, or, in other words, to the power, felicity, and skill with which the actors imitate the real scenes, circumstances, events, passions, emotions, and catastrophes which they represent on the stage. The deepest tragedy will but lightly affect the audience if it be bunglingly represented; yet the distress is the same whether it be represented by a good or a bad actor. It matters little whether a man be put to death clown-like, or soldier-like, whether poison be drank awkwardly or gracefully: the distress, in all cases, is the same. As the pleasure, then, is far from being the same, or, rather, as there is little or no pleasure in witnessing the best tragedy when badly performed, it follows, that a portion, at least, of the pleasure resulting from Tragic Represen-

tations, arises from the skill and dramatic genius of the performers. If this were not the case, Kean's Richard would not impart more pleasure than the late Mr. Kemble's, nor Mrs. Siddons' Belvidera than Miss O'Neils. This part of the pleasure cannot, consequently, be traced to the power or influence of virtue over the heart ; for I have already shewn, that the pleasure we find in imitation has no alliance with virtue, because the pleasure is the same whether the imitation be executed by a moral and religious, or by an abandoned unprincipled artist. While, therefore, it cannot be denied that all virtuous emotions are pleasing, it is obvious that the entire of the emotions arising from Tragedy cannot be traced to a sense of virtue ; and that, consequently, the aggregate of Tragic Pleasure must be traced to some more general law of human nature.

We come now to the theory which ascribes Tragic Pleasure to *sympathy*. This is the most popular theory on the subject, having not only the bulk of mankind for its supporters, but also some philosophers and eminent writers : at least, that they were of this opinion may be easily collected from their works.

It is usual, however, with philosophers, as with the rest of mankind, to mistake effects for causes, of which we have an instance in the theory which we are now going to examine. Sympathy cannot

be the cause of any pleasure, for instead of being a cause, it is an effect : instead of producing pleasure, it is itself the very pleasure which it is said to produce, and of the origin of which we are at present in pursuit. Whenever we see an innocent person placed in any situation, which, in our opinion, renders him more unhappy than we are ourselves, we feel sensible of an immediate, instinctive emotion which prompts us to solace and alleviate his sufferings ; and, even if we cannot effect his relief, we still place ourselves in his situation, and indulge, in a certain degree, the same wishes of seeing him released that he does himself. It is a curious fact, however, that we cannot feel this sanctified emotion in the misfortunes of others, if we are ourselves more unfortunate than they are. It is true, indeed, that if we are only equal to them in distress, we cannot refuse them our sympathy. We share in their afflictions, because they assimilate with our own ; but, however unfortunate they are, we resist the sympathetic impulse, if we be still more unfortunate ourselves. This, at least, is the general law of our nature ; but, like all general laws, it has its exceptions. We sympathize, for instance, in the sufferings of a dear friend, or a near relation, even when they are less than our own, because, the law which attaches us to them, is more powerful than the law which prevents us from sympathizing with lighter

evils than those which we ourselves endure. This general law will easily explain, why adversity indurates all the finer susceptibilities of our nature, and leaves us almost without a particle of commiseration for the distresses of others. Whenever we sympathize, however, in the misfortunes of any individual, it is clear that the sympathetic emotion is caused by the circumstances in which he is placed. It is, therefore, an effect, and not a cause ; and so are all the emotions and passions that ever agitated the human breast. They are never felt until some circumstance occurs which is calculated to excite them. We know from experience, that the emotion which we call sympathy, is a pleasing emotion, which is saying, in other words, that sympathy is a pleasure. It cannot be a pleasure, however, according to the theory which we are now examining, as it makes sympathy the cause by which the pleasure is produced. The pleasures which we ascribe to sympathy, therefore, should be more properly ascribed to the various circumstances and situations by which various modifications of sympathy are excited within us. No two circumstances will produce the same modification, for the sympathetic emotion will vary in its degree and character, according to the diversity of the circumstances by which it is excited. We sympathize in the distress of a parent who has lost his only son ; we sympathize also in the

distress of a parent who lost one son out of twelve. In these cases, the sympathetic emotion differs only in degree ; but when we sympathize in the fate of two unfortunate lovers, the emotion which we experience differs from the former, not only in degree, but likewise in character. In all these instances, however, the emotion which we feel is pleasing to us, so that whatever produces a sympathetic emotion, necessarily produces a pleasing one, for both emotions are but one and the same impression. We cannot separate the pleasing from the sympathetic emotion, even in idea ; so that it is perfectly confounding cause and effect to ascribe the pleasure resulting from Tragic Scenes to sympathy, because sympathy, so far from being the cause of pleasure, is, itself, the pleasure which is said to proceed from some sympathy.

According to Adam Smith's theory of sympathy, comedy should be much more pleasing to us than tragedy. " We often struggle," he says, " to keep down our sympathy with the sorrow of others. Whenever we are not under the observation of the sufferer we endeavour, for our own sake, to suppress it as much as we can ; but we never have occasion to make this opposition to our sympathy with joy. When there is no envy in the case, our propensity to sympathize with joy is much stronger than our propensity to sympathize with sorrow. Adversity depresses the mind

of the sufferer much more below its natural state than prosperity can elevate him above it. The spectator must, therefore, find it much more difficult to sympathize entirely, and keep perfect time with his sorrow; than thoroughly to enter into his joy, and must depart much further from his own natural and ordinary temper of mind in the one case than in the other. It is on this account that, though our sympathy with sorrow is often a more pungent sensation than our sympathy with joy, it always falls much more short of the violence of what is naturally felt by the person principally concerned. When we attend to the representation of a tragedy, we struggle against that sympathetic sorrow which the entertainment inspires, as long as we can, and we give way to it at last only when we can no longer avoid it. We even then endeavour to cover our concern from the company. If we shed any tears we carefully conceal them, and are afraid lest the spectators, not entering into this excessive tenderness, should regard it as effeminacy and weakness."

This theory of sympathy would appear to have been written by a person who drew his observations from his own feelings, but who, unhappily, had no sympathetic feeling to consult. If our propensity to sympathize with joy be much stronger than our propensity to sympathize with sorrow, why do we prefer tragedies to comedies?

why do the former bring fuller houses? and why are the deepest tragedies the most interesting of all others?

However we may reason on the subject, therefore, experience proves, that the pleasure which we derive from sympathizing with the misfortunes of others, imparts a delight which we would not exchange for all the unprized, and undignified pleasure that can be extracted from the most rapturous bursts of merriment. The fact is, that the more extravagantly we perceive a person indulge his joyful sensations, the less we are inclined to sympathize with him; whereas our sympathy always increases with the deepening depth of affliction. We resist the sympathetic emotions, in the one case, and we feel pleased with ourselves for doing so; or, if we indulge it in the extreme, so far from claiming credit for our sympathy, we blush to reflect upon it; while, in the other, we give free indulgence to all the luxury of grief. The reason of this approbation and disapprobation is obvious, however difficult it may be to account for the pleasure that accompanies our grief. Immoderate joy is the pleasure not only of weak but of little minds. No sensation should be stronger than the agency of the cause by which it is excited, and the causes that produce joy can never act with such intensity on the risible part of our nature, as the causes that are productive of grief and torment. The most heart-

felt joy bears no proportion to the most agonizing pain ; not only, because there is no proportion between the intensity of these opposite sensations, at the moment, but because the reflection with which each of them is attended, serves to abate the one in the same proportion that it increases the other. However elevated or enraptured we may be by the excitement of the moment, we know, that this excitement will be of short duration, even though the cause which produces it should continue through life ; for we are so constituted by nature, that the strongest excitement soon loses its effect upon us, and the more powerfully it is suffered to act, the greater is the depression by which it is followed. A consciousness, therefore, of the short-lived nature of excessive joy serves to moderate its indulgence in all rational minds ; and, consequently, we refuse to sympathize with him who places no restraint upon it, because if he choose to forget, we, who are mere spectators, cannot forget, that this paroxysm will soon be at an end ; and, therefore, it moderates *our* joy, at least, if it does not moderate *his*. The reflection that accompanies grief or pain serves, on the contrary, not only to increase it, but to increase our sympathy for its unhappy victim. No man can properly be said to be in grief, who has a certainty, that the cause of his uneasiness is only to continue a few days or hours. The man who is thrown into prison for life, and confined in



a cold, dark, and cheerless dungeon, not only feels the physical pain of the moment, but increases it by reflecting, that death only can put an end to his sufferings. The lover who weeps over the grave of her whose presence was his heaven, whose image was his paradise, but whom even the maddening dreams of delusive hope can no longer restore to his ardent wishes, feels not only all the pains and grief of separation, but all those deeper and indescribable torments suggested by the reflection that this separation must last for ever. Immoderate joy can arise only from physical impulses, for mental pleasures are of a more chastened and refined nature; but grief has not only to contend with the physical pains of the moment, but with those eternally mingled and multiplied associations which force themselves upon the imagination, or which this busy and inventive faculty cannot refrain from creating, even when they plunge it in all the gloom and horrors of despair.

When Mr. Smith says, that "adversity depresses the mind of the sufferer much more below its natural state than prosperity can elevate him above it," he evidently confounds the person who suffers with him who sympathizes in his sufferings, when he infers from this depression our unwillingness to indulge in sympathy with sorrow. He should have recollected, however, that in treating of sympathy, we should rest our principles, not upon him who

suffers, or who endures this adversity, but upon him who sympathizes in his calamity. The suffering man feels no sympathy himself, for it is a fact, supported by experience, that he who suffers pain is incapable of sympathizing in the pains of others, unless they are still greater than his own. Hence it is, that adversity blunts all the finer feelings and sensibilities of the heart, and makes us strangers to that sympathetic and tender commiseration which glows in the bosoms of those who are themselves strangers to the pangs of adversity. To say that the pains of such sympathy "depresses the mind," is to say what is the very reverse of the fact; for we never feel ourselves more ennobled, we are never so pleased and gratified with ourselves as when we feel ourselves yielding to the divine and hallowed impulse of sympathy or commiseration with the sufferings of others. In fact, it is only great and noble minds that are capable of this feeling, and so far from regretting the pains and humiliation which, Mr. Smith says, accompanies it; there is no reflection to which they recur with more pride and pleasure, than that which reminds them of it. It proves not only a guardian angel that warns them against the seductions of vice, but which eternally prompts them to pursue that unsullied course of life which is the parent of great and generous emotions; of those emotions which not only impart all the felicity that can be enjoyed

in this life, but which realize by their secret impulses, and indescribable communications, a portion of that inheritance which we anticipate in the next. The slightest inclination to levity, the slightest temptation to stray from the paths of virtue and honour, is instantly extinguished, the moment we reflect on those emotions by which we felt ourselves ennobled when we sympathized with virtue in distress ; for to say that we can sympathize with vice, that we can identify ourselves with the pains and sufferings of him who leads a life of iniquity, who has spent his life in studying to promote his own interests, at the expense of others, is to say, that we are ourselves, if I may use a vulgar expression, a chip of the same block. Congenial natures only can sympathize with each other ; and, therefore, however we may pity, we cannot sympathize with him whose principles of conduct have been at variance with those which we ourselves hold sacred. However afflicted we perceive any individual to be, we repress, as much as we can, our sympathetic emotions, or, at least, those incipient impulses that prompt us to sympathize with him, if he be a stranger, until we discover whether he has brought this affliction upon himself by abandonment of principle, or profligacy of character ; and if we discover that he has, the small degree of sympathy which we could not entirely suppress while we remained in doubt, becomes instantly

extinct. We may still, perhaps, continue to pity, but we cannot sympathize. Our sympathies can only be elicited by those in whom we perceive no quality or disposition of mind which we ourselves would blush to avow. "Sympathy," to use the words of a French writer, "is that reciprocity of affection and of inclination, that quick communication of one heart with another, which is imparted and felt with an inexplicable rapidity; it is that conformity of natural qualities, ideas, humours and tempers, by which two kindred spirits seek each other, love each other, become attached to each other, and melt into one."\* Whatever draws the heart to any object, the sensation or passion by which it is drawn is a sympathetic emotion, and therefore love is the strongest of all sympathies, and hatred the strongest of all antipathies. In proportion as any two natures resemble each other, will they approach to each other; and in proportion as they differ from each other, will they recoil. As sympathy, then, is the opposite to antipathy, it can exist only between kindred

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\* Cette convenance d'affection et d'inclination, cette intelligence des cœurs communiquée répendue, sentie avec une rapidité inexplicable; cette conformité des qualités naturelles, d'idées, d'humeurs, et de temperamens par laquelle deux âmes assorties, se cherchent, s'aiment, s'attachent l'une à l'autre se confondent ensemble, c'est ce qu'on nomme *Sympathie*. — *Encyclopedie. Article, Sympathie*.

natures, or, at least, its degree will always depend on the degree of affinity that exists between them. It is this affinity that causes affection, and this affection is only another name for sympathy. I cannot, therefore, agree with Mr. Smith, that "we often struggle to keep down our sympathy with the sorrows of others," and "suppress it as much as we can, whenever we are not under their observation." In fact, the person who sympathizes with his suffering friend only while he is in his presence, and seeks to suppress his sympathy the moment he departs, is only he who works himself into a false sympathy, and assumes a virtue which he does not feel, in order to impose on his friend. Such a man is a hypocrite, and if he believe that that emotion which he endeavours to suppress, after departing from his friend, was real sympathy, it only proves, that sympathy is a virtue, of which he who never felt it, wishes to believe himself possessed. Such is the power of virtue over the human mind, that the most hardened villain endeavours to reconcile himself with his conscience, and ascribes his evil actions either to temptation or necessity, so that his system of reasoning, as well as his self-love, makes him believe, that he has many good qualities, and that he is, at bottom, as good as others. It is so with sympathy: so sweet and humanizing are its charms, and so peculiarly does it mark out those who are most susceptible of its

sacred impulse, as the peculiar favourites of heaven, that even the man whose stubborn and intractable nature has never suffered him to feel the pleasing luxury of woe, cannot endure to be thought incapable of sympathetic emotions. He therefore endeavours to work himself into a false sympathy, while he is in the presence of his suffering friend, but the moment he departs, he seeks to work himself out of it. He finds it is not natural to him ; he is of too gross and earthly a mould to cherish so *ennobling* and divine a sensation. He therefore shakes it off, and returns to his natural insensibility. We are always uneasy while we are out of our natural element.

*Naturam expellas, furca tamen usque recurret.*

Or, as Juvenal expresses it,

*Custode et cura natura potentior omni.*

We do not, then, as Mr. Smith affirms “struggle to keep down our sympathies with the sorrows of others, whenever we are not under their observation,” but we endeavour to suppress that *mook* sympathy which we attempted to impose upon them for genuine. Real sympathy, so far from depressing, ennobles the mind ; so far from seeking to suppress, we cherish it as the most sacred pledge of our humanity, the most pleasing, because the most virtuous, impulse of which we ever felt conscious.

.....Ask the faithful youth,  
 Why the cold urn of her whom long he lov'd  
 So often fills his arms,—so often draws  
 His lonely foot-steps, at the silent hour,  
 To pay the mournful tribute of his tears ?  
 Oh ! he will tell thee that the wealth of worlds  
*Should ne'er seduce his bosom to forget*  
 That sacred hour, when stealing from the noise  
 Of care and envy, sweet remembrance soothes,  
 With virtue's kindest look, his aching breast,  
*And turns his tears to rapture.*

Sympathy, then, so far from depressing, not only ennobles us, as I have just observed, but turns our very “tears to rapture;”—so far from struggling to suppress it, “the wealth of worlds cannot seduce us to forego it.” Mr. Smith has, therefore, taken a most erroneous view of the nature of sympathy, when he says, that we “find it much more difficult to sympathize entirely, and keep perfect time with sorrow, than thoroughly to enter into joy;” for if we have the least difficulty in the former case, it is impossible, by any effort of nature, to make us sympathize at all. We may pity,—we may commiserate,—a cold sense of duty may make us perform all the kind offices to the sufferer, which the virtue of charity inculcates ; but still we may not feel a particle of sympathy ; for all this may be done where the object of our pity is the most depraved and abandoned of human beings ; but sympathy cannot be created or excited within us by any effort

of our own ; it must come of its own accord, or not come at all ; it must come upon us like a thief, and, in general, its approaches are secret and imperceptible. We cannot, by any effort of our own, create any unmixed feeling, such as sympathy, joy, hatred, &c. They can result only from the operation of some external influence, and our susceptibility of yielding to the influence exercised over us. Neither of these causes can, of itself, produce any unmixed feeling within us ; it always requires the co-operation of both. No agency can, of itself, excite sympathy, joy, or hatred, if our natures are averse to their indulgence ; that is, if we be so organized as to have a natural antipathy for hatred, joy, or sympathy ; nor can any disposition of our natures to the indulgence of these feelings, enable us to excite them by any effort of our own, without the co-operation of some external influence. No man ever fell into a fit, or paroxysm of joy, but could tell what caused it. He can always point out something that excited this extraordinary burst of merriment. It is so with hatred : no man, however formed by nature with a disposition for hatred, can feel this passion, until some object or quality, repulsive to his feelings, awaken it in his breast. Sympathy, in like manner, cannot be felt by the kindest and the most humane of mortals, until some object fitted to excite it presents itself to his view. When Mr. Smith therefore says, “ it is more



difficult to sympathize entirely, and keep perfect time with sorrow, than thoroughly to enter into joy," he evidently imagines, that we can create feelings of ourselves, without any assistance from external agency. He does not perceive, that where such an agency is exercised over us, there can be no difficulty in yielding to it, if we are susceptible of the feeling which it is calculated to excite, and that if we are not, no effort can enable us to feel its influence. Hence it requires no greater effort on our part to enter into, and become possessed of the most powerful passions, those passions that carry us farthest from our "own natural and ordinary temper of mind," than to yield to the slightest modes of feeling, simply because it requires no effort whatever in either case. The slightest sensation which we feel cannot be produced without a cause or agency: the strongest sensation, emotion, or passion, requires an agency proportionately strong. Where such agencies are exercised, the one produces its effect with the same ease as, and with neither more nor less difficulty than, the other. If Thomas be four times stronger than James, he lifts four hundred weight with as much ease as, and with neither more nor less difficulty than, James can lift one hundred. This law holds good throughout the immense, and perhaps the illimitable, creation, which is subject to the dominion of cause and effect. Thus it is, that Lear found no greater difficulty in

departing from his "own natural, and ordinary temper of mind," and becoming an irreclaimable, immedicable, incurable madman, than the drunkard feels in passing from a state of sobriety to that of intoxication. Neither Lear became mad, nor Anacreon drunk, without a cause sufficient to produce the effect ; and where such a cause exists, it is contrary to the laws of Nature, if the effect does not follow it. There is no difficulty, therefore, in departing from our "natural and ordinary temper of mind," where there is a sufficient impulse to force us from it : the great difficulty consists, not in yielding to the impulse, but in resisting it. I must, at the same time, confess myself entirely ignorant of what Mr. Smith means by "*Sympathizing entirely*, and keeping *perfect time* with sorrow ;" for if he mean that we do not sympathize entirely as much as the person who is the object of our sympathy, I reply, that we sympathize infinitely more if we sympathize at all ; simply, because he who is wrestling in the pangs of affliction, cannot, as I have already observed, sympathize in the least. It is only he who is free from all pain and affliction himself, that can properly sympathize in the woes of others. "The happy man," as Helvetius observes, "is humane : he is the couching lion." The unhappy man retires within himself : he has no sympathy to impart ; all external influences lose their effect upon him ; he is dark, gloomy, and

irresponsive; and therefore, however much we may lament his misfortunes, however much we may sympathize in his griefs, however willing we may be to excuse his insensibility, which we should always do, if it arise from the circumstances in which he is placed, and not from the natural inflexibility or insensibility of his disposition, we must not expect, that all these indulgences, nor all the marks of attention, kindness, and regret which we can express towards him, can make him sympathize with us as strongly as we sympathize with him, until he is first placed in the enjoyment of equal happiness with ourselves. He feels gratitude, it is true, but gratitude is not sympathy. Mr. Smith, then, either means nothing, or means what is wrong, when he says, that we cannot “sympathize entirely with his sorrow;” for if he mean by *entirely*, that we do not sympathize as much as he does, it is evident from the preceding observations, that we sympathize infinitely more; for as the smallest particle of matter is infinitely greater than nothing, in consequence of its divisibility *ad infinitum*, so must his total want of sympathy be infinitely less than the degree of sympathy which we feel, however slight it may be in itself. If he mean by sympathizing “*entirely*,” that our sympathy is not sufficiently strong, I reply, that the entirety of sympathy does not depend on the degree in which it is felt. Though all modes of feeling are

not equally strong, yet they are all equally whole and entire, as the particular degree in which any mode is felt can have no relation to the property that constitutes its essence or entirety. Feeling, like the soul, of which it is a mere affection, is incapable of being divided into parts, and whatever is incapable of parts is equally incapable of being made more or less entire than it is already. If not, no degree of sympathy would be entire, as a higher degree would be *more entire*, an expression which is neither sense nor grammar. It is not, therefore, so difficult as Mr. Smith imagines, to sympathize *entirely* with sorrow; and he himself, in a few lines after, gives a clear proof of it. "When we attend," he says, "to the representation of a tragedy, we struggle against that sympathetic sorrow which the entertainment inspires, as long as we can, and we give way to it at last only when we can no longer avoid it. We even then endeavour to cover our concern from the company. If we shed any tears, we carefully conceal them, and are afraid lest the spectators, not entering into this excessive tenderness, should regard it as effeminacy and weakness." How Mr. Smith could suppose that these observations, admitting them to be true, and, with regard to the majority of cultivated society, they undoubtedly are so, is a proof that sympathy with sorrow is not so natural and pleasing to us as sympathy with joy, I am at a loss to

determine. To me it appears, that stronger arguments cannot be adduced, to prove that the former sympathy is, beyond all comparison, the most natural and congenial to our feelings. When we struggle against that sympathetic sorrow which tragedy inspires, is it not evident that we struggle against our own nature ; that we are endeavouring to suppress its natural operations, and the sympathetic affections to which it wishes us to resign ourselves? Our struggling against them by no means proves, that they are unnatural and displeasing to us ; for if so, it follows, that whatever the fashionable world profess to be displeased with, must be naturally displeasing, antecedent to fashion and to its influence over the mind. This, we know, is not the fact : natural pleasures, and natural manners, are pleasing to all men, and the fashionable man professes to despise them only because he has suffered himself to become a slave to principles which have no foundation in nature. It is so in the case before us : when we struggle against the sympathetic emotions of sorrow, we connect ourselves with the fashionable world ; for if we acted according to the laws of our nature, we should, so far from struggling, yield instinctively to this delightful emotion. It is not the emotion, then, that is unnatural, but the act by which we endeavour to suppress it. Should it be objected, that we would not endeavour to suppress it, if it were not natural

for us to do so, I reply, that no man would endeavour to suppress it, if he were alone, and unobserved. We repress it only because each of us is, unhappily, vain enough to suppose, that his countenance is watched by those around him; and, as it is not sanctioned by the rules of fashionable life to appear externally affected by internal emotions, we endeavour to suppress, I must say unnaturally, those affections and passions by which we are agitated, and which nature only could have originally inspired. It is idle, then, to suppose, that when we "endeavour to cover our concern from the company," we do so because it is unnatural to feel affected at the time. In such cases, we are always determined, not by our own feelings, but by what we suppose to be the opinion of others. We throw aside the immutable standard of nature, and are blindly guided by the capricious standard of fashion. The truth of these observations will be placed beyond all doubt, if we look to the manners of natural society, where we find no restraint placed on the external signs of passion. Pleasure and pain, love and hatred, hope and fear, are no sooner felt, than they are expressed in the countenance, without being in the least tempered or modified by any unnatural struggle to suppress them, or to silence that natural language, in which they so eloquently express themselves. If, as Cicero says, *Omnis motus animi, suum quendam a natura habet vultum et sonum, et gestum,*

surely it must be admitted, that such external signs of internal emotions, are natural and agreeable to us, and, if so, the struggles of those who endeavour to suppress them, are consequently unnatural. "Excessive joy," says Lord Kaimes, "is expressed by leaping, dancing, or some elevation of the body: excessive grief, by sinking or depressing it." Which is it, then, more philosophical to conclude, that these are natural signs of natural passions, or to maintain with Mr. Smith, that, because some people struggle to suppress them, which is evidently done from an apprehension of appearing vulgar, they are neither natural nor agreeable to us. That they are natural, I believe no one will deny, but that they are agreeable, may not, perhaps, be so implicitly and universally admitted. It requires, however, only a little reflection to perceive, that whatever is natural is always more agreeable than that which is opposed to it. He who manifests his joy by dancing and leaping, is certainly happier than he who endeavours to suppress these signs of his passion; and the spectator who approves of, and sympathizes in his enjoyment, is also happier in indulging this sympathy, than the cold disciple of fashion, who affects to smile at his want of taste. It is so with grief: the person who yields to it without resistance is happier than he whose stubborn nature will not suffer him to bend to it. Hence, tears prove always the greatest relief to the afflicted,

while he who is incapable of shedding them, is a prey to the most agonizing and tormenting pain.

The remainder of Mr. Smith's theory of sympathy is, as may reasonably be expected, equally erroneous; for he who mistakes his way at the commencement, can afterwards go right only by chance. While we detect error, however, we are not justified in condemning it, or, more properly speaking, we are not justified in attributing it to the absence of intellectual power. Error reposes under the shade of the highest authorities, for who has been able to avoid its snares. The retreats of certainty are frequently concealed from us in impenetrable darkness, so that inspiration alone, or the secret guidance of instinct, can sometimes lead us to the wizard and unfrequented haunts in which it has fixed its abode. It escapes, when it lists, all the acumen and penetration of genius, and all the analyzing discrimination and researches of philosophy. But while the contracted bounds of human intellect oblige us to excuse error, we cannot so easily forgive inconsistency. One fundamental error leads to a thousand more; but inconsistency is always the offspring of immediate inattention, or confusion of ideas. While, therefore, we excuse the continuity of error which marks the remainder of Mr. Smith's Theory, we cannot so easily pass over its palpable inconsistencies. "When we condole," he says, "with our friends in their afflictions,



how little do we feel in comparison to what they feel. We sit down by them, we look at them ; and while they relate to us the circumstances of their misfortunes, we listen to them with gravity and attention. But while their narration is every moment interrupted by those natural bursts of passion, which often seem almost to choke them in the midst of it, how far are the languid emotions of our hearts from keeping tune to the transports of theirs. We may be sensible, at the same time, that their passion is natural, and no greater than what we ourselves might feel upon the like occasion. We may even inwardly reproach ourselves with our want of sensibility, and, perhaps, on that account, work ourselves up into an artificial sympathy, which, however, when it is raised, is always the slightest and most transitory imaginable, and, generally, when we have left the room, vanishes, and is gone for ever."

From the first sentence in this passage Mr. Smith wishes to infer, that as we do not feel the afflictions of another as much as he feels himself, we are more inclined to sympathize with joy than with sorrow. This inference was certainly never deduced from the philosophy of human nature, or the common feelings of mankind ; for, however deeply we may feel for the misfortunes of a friend, it is obvious that our feelings must be entirely of a different character from his. The character

of every feeling is determined by the cause or circumstances by which it is produced. There can be no affinity or similarity of feeling between Henry, who is so passionately enamoured of Eliza that he would sacrifice his life to preserve her's, and James, who bears her such mortal hatred that he would instantly suffer death if it could only lead to her destruction. Both feelings are equally intense; but as the one proceeds from love, the other from hatred, no comparison can be instituted between them. While ever the causes of feeling are different, the feelings themselves must be equally so. It is therefore impossible, that he who suffers under any affliction, and he who sympathizes in his sufferings, can ever feel alike. The feelings of the former are caused by the situation in which he is placed, or the bodily pains by which he is afflicted, but those of the latter cannot arise from either of these causes, as he is neither placed in the same situation, nor tormented by the same pains. He has no feelings on the occasion but what are entirely of a mental character, as they arise, not from any physical causes or circumstances affecting himself. All his feelings, at the moment, are excited, by reflecting on the situation of his friend, and his distressed state of mind. His feelings are therefore caused by reflection, which is a mental act, whereas those of his friend are produced by real, sensible causes, namely, the situation in which

he is placed, or the physical pains which he is actually enduring. He, therefore, who sympathizes can never feel like the person with whom he sympathizes, unless he be placed in the same situation, or afflicted by the same pains, in which case his sympathy, is at an end, and he only feels for himself. It is therefore perfectly inconsistent to institute any comparison between the feelings of him who suffers, and him who sympathizes in his sufferings, as they can never be of the same character, unless the latter can fancy himself in the situation of the former, that is, unless he can part with his senses, in which case, his feelings are not those of sympathy but of actual suffering.

If, however, it should be said, that Mr. Smith does not allude to any similarity of feeling between them, and only means to express the small degree of sympathy which we are apt to feel for our suffering friends; he is, even in this case, as inconsistent as in the former. If he spoke from his own experience, he rested his assertion on the most fallacious and uncertain ground, as the degree of sympathy which he usually felt for his suffering friends could by no means determine the degree in which it is felt by others. Cold, phlegmatic dispositions (and philosophers not unfrequently are found among this class) feel little or no sympathy for distress of any kind; but even among men of more sanguine temperaments, the degrees of sym-

pathy are as different as the different degrees of susceptibility imparted to them by nature. In fact, we can never pretend to say whether an individual will feel a "little," or a great degree of sympathy, unless we are very intimately acquainted with him, and have sufficient opportunities of ascertaining his natural susceptibility of feeling. Nor can even this knowledge enable us to decide, if the person with whose distress he sympathizes be not a total stranger to him ; for, with regard to our friends, our sympathy depends as much on accidental biases, and peculiar relations, as on our natural susceptibility of impressions. Hence, he who has several unfortunate friends, cannot sympathize alike with any two of them, because the degree of sympathy which he feels for each of them, will depend on the degree of affliction endured, and the degree of attachment which he had previously felt for him who endures it. Mr. Smith, therefore, manifests no very extensive knowledge of human nature, when he says, that while our friends "relate to us the circumstances of their misfortunes, we listen to them with gravity and attention," for if some of us do so, there are many among us who listen to them with very different feelings, and whose tears bear testimony to the sensibility of their hearts. Theirs is not that "artificial sympathy which generally vanishes when we have left the room, and is gone for ever;" and I cannot help repeating, that Mr. Smith

would seem to have taken his theory of sympathy, and particularly his idea of artificial sympathy, from observations made on the state of his own feelings, whenever his sympathy was called for. A little philosophy, however, would have taught him, that in this, as in all other cases, the feelings of one man can never determine the feelings of another. What follows is still worse; "It is on account of this dull insensibility to the afflictions of others, that magnanimity amidst great distress appears always so divinely graceful. We feel what an immense effort is requisite to silence those violent emotions which naturally agitate and distract those in his situation. We are amazed to find that he can command himself so entirely. His firmness, at the same time, perfectly coincides with our insensibility. He makes no demand upon us for that more exquisite degree of sensibility which we find, and which we are mortified to find, that we do not possess. There is the most perfect correspondence between his sentiments and ours; and, on that account, the most perfect propriety in his behaviour.

"Whenever we meet in common life with any examples of such heroic magnanimity, we are always extremely affected. We are more apt to weep and shed tears for such as, in this manner, seem to feel nothing for themselves, than those who give way to all the weakness of sorrow. And in this particular case, the sympathetic grief of the

spectator appears to go beyond the original passion in the person principally concerned. The friends of Socrates all wept when he drank the last potion, while he himself expressed the gayest and most cheerful tranquillity. Upon all such occasions, the spectator makes no effort, and has no occasion to make any, in order to conquer his sympathetic sorrow. He is under no fear that it will transport him to any thing that is extravagant and improper; he is rather pleased with the sensibility of his own heart, and gives way to it with complacency and self-approbation. He gladly indulges, therefore, the most melancholy views which can naturally occur to him, concerning the calamity of his friend, for whom, perhaps, he never felt so exquisitely before the tender and tearful passion of love. But it is quite otherwise with the person principally concerned. He is obliged, as much as possible, to turn away his eyes from whatever is either naturally terrible or disagreeable in his situation. Too serious an attention to those circumstances he fears might make so violent an impression upon him, that he could no longer keep within the bounds of moderation, or render himself the object of the complete sympathy and approbation of the spectators. He fixes his thoughts, therefore, upon those only which are agreeable, the applause and admiration which he is about to deserve by the heroic magnanimity of his behaviour. To feel that he is capable of so noble and generous an effort, to feel that he can act in this

dreadful situation, as he would desire to act, animates and transports him with joy, and enables him to support that triumphant gaiety which seems to exult in the victory he thus gains over his misfortunes."

The "dull insensibility" here spoken of can belong only to minds which are naturally insensible; and with regard to them the laws of sympathy can have no reference. The conclusions which Mr. Smith draws from this dulness are, therefore, erroneous; nor is that "magnanimity amidst great distress, so divinely graceful" as he imagines. He who makes "an immense effort to silence those violent emotions which naturally agitate and distract those in his situation," is not the person most calculated to excite our sympathy; and though I agree with Mr. Smith, that "we are amazed to find that he can command himself so entirely;" I deny the conclusion which he draws from it, namely, that "we are more apt to weep and shed tears for such as in this manner feel nothing for themselves." On the contrary, our amazement, so far from exciting our sympathy, or making us shed tears, suppresses the one, and dries up the other. Admiration is destructive of all those softer feelings which associate with sympathy and love. The frailties and weaknesses of minds naturally virtuous, are the true inspirers of sympathy. We cannot sympathize with him whom we admire, because we can admire only those who rank above

ourselves either in mental or personal accomplishments. Such accomplishments, however, instead of sympathy and affection, excite pride and jealousy. "It is the soft green of the soul," as Mr. Burke says, "on which we rest our eyes that are fatigued with beholding more glaring objects." I have already observed, that only kindred natures can sympathize with each other; but there are certain qualities which are pleasing to all men, and with which, consequently, all men sympathize. The most remarkable of these is weakness. We admire strength and greatness of mind, but we are conscious of no impulse that prompts us to approach and sympathize with it. Rivalry or emulation is the only passion which it can excite, and if we want this ambition, we retire from its glare to commune with weaknesses and frailties congenial with our own. With him who claims not our assistance, who has within himself all the resources of which he stands in need, and who is too proud and unbending to be indebted to others, we cannot sympathize. He has no quality that we can love. His unsocial, unbending, uninviting disposition has no claim to attract us, none of that yielding amiability of manners that win the soul, and melt into sympathy the most stubborn and inflexible natures.

But if we really "weep and shed tears for him who feels nothing for himself," how can we be told that his firmness perfectly coincides with our *insensibility*.



Besides, whatever is unnatural is, from the very constitution of our nature, both offensive and repulsive to us. When, therefore, we behold a person in misfortune endure it with stoic apathy, when we perceive that he affects to be unaffected by it, we feel instinctively that his inflexibility arises from pride, or real insensibility and doggishness of character. With neither of these can we sympathize: to pride we have a natural antipathy, and with a man of a hardened and indurated mind, we cannot enter into that communion of feeling which is the soul of sympathy, because we know that he is himself incapable of sympathizing in the woes of others. Such a man, however, is more worthy, if not of our sympathy, at least of our pity, than he whose feigned insensibility arises from pride, and the desire of gaining "the applause and admiration" of others; for he adds hypocrisy to pride: he feels pain, but he affects not to feel it; he is in torment, but he will not acknowledge it. If this be not hypocrisy, I know not what is. Are we then to sympathize with a hypocrite, to weep and shed tears with him, when we refuse it to those who openly impart to us the torments and anxieties that distract their mind? Such an avowal is a compliment to our humanity, for no person acknowledges his sufferings to him whom he knows incapable of sympathizing in them. Hence it is, that we are communicative only to those who are communicative them-

selves, who acknowledge to us all the secrets of their heart, all the fears, anxieties, weaknesses, and frailties to which they are subject. From such people we conceal nothing, and our sympathy for them, under affliction, extends even to their faults. On the contrary, however much we may respect and confide in the honour of an individual who seeks not our sympathy, who despises the balm of human consolation, and seeks for comfort only in communing with his own mind, we cannot prevail upon ourselves to communicate to him either our hopes or fears, our enjoyments or privations, our pains or pleasures. From such a man we recede by a sort of instinctive impulse, which we can neither account for nor controul.

Mr. Smith and many other writers have, no doubt, taken this erroneous theory of sympathy from Aristotle, who reproves those tragic writers that put whining, exaggerated complaints into the mouths of their characters.\* Perceiving the propriety of Aristotle's reproof, they have gone into the opposite extreme, and maintained, that he who does not complain at all, is he who is most apt to excite our sympathy. Here, however, as in all other cases, extremes meet; and the one extreme is as barren of sympathy as the other. No one can excite our sympathy who does not appear to

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\* Poetic 8. xxviii.

stand in need of it; and therefore a perfect character has no business on the stage, because he can never acknowledge himself in need of our assistance. Such an acknowledgement is a confession of weakness, and a confession of weakness is virtually a confession of imperfection. Perfection wants nothing, seeks for nothing, and, therefore, neither claims, nor is entitled to sympathy. Hence we find, that a perfect character has never succeeded on the stage, because he has never excited either sympathy or interest. It is only he who is subject to all the turmoils and impetuosity of the passions, to all the weaknesses and imperfections of human nature, that can ever create our sympathy, or interest us in his fate. The most interesting character, it is true, is a man endowed by nature with a virtuous disposition, but carried away, at the same time, by ungovernable passions; but let him only trample upon these passions and return to his original virtuous disposition, and we take no further interest in him;—we find he is no object of that sympathy, which, to the credit of human nature be it spoken, we are unwilling to bestow where it is not wanted. But, though such a man, while he yielded to his passions, was more interesting than an evil-disposed man, actuated by the same passions, the most abandoned character would be more interesting than him, after his return to virtue, provided that, with all his abandonment of prin-

ciple, he was subject to passion. There is that in the nature of passion, which leads us to believe, (and our belief is well founded) that whoever yields to it acts blindly at the moment, whether he be naturally a good or an evil man. Virtue and vice have no affinity whatever with passion, the former consisting in an inclination to what is good, the latter in a propensity to what is evil. Passion, however, is neither good nor evil, virtuous nor vicious, in itself, though yielding to it is sometimes a vice, and resisting it sometimes a virtue. It is the act of volition which we exercise, in consenting to the gratification of certain passions that constitutes vice, for the impulse that prompts us to it can have nothing of evil in it, though it prompts to evil. If the impulse itself were evil, God would be the author of evil, because we are so constituted as to be subject to these impulses. The virtuous and the vicious are, therefore, equally subject to the dominion of passion, and when it proves too powerful for them, it leads them blindly along, and extinguishes the light of reason at the moment. Hence it is, that we have some pity even for the evil-minded man, when we see him obeying, not the dictates of his natural and habitual villainy, but those passions to which we are ourselves subject, and to which, perhaps, we would have equally yielded, had we been in his situation. In fact, passion, so far from

making a villain appear more detestable, makes him appear infinitely more amiable. It shews us, that, with all his abandonment of principle, he is still one of ourselves, subject to the same weaknesses, governed by the same impulses. Passion, therefore, humanizes him, makes him approach nearer to us, and gives him so strong a claim upon our sympathy, that we cannot totally withhold it from him. There can, therefore, be no sympathy where there is no passion to excite it: deprive this evil-minded man of all his passions, teach him to act the villain coolly and deliberately, let him always be governed by selfish and interested motives, but never yield, in the slightest degree, to the influence of passion, and we instantly spurn him from our presence:—he is no longer the object of our commiseration or pity.

Neither virtue nor vice, then, can excite our sympathy without passion, though we continue to respect the one, and to detest the other; but, wherever passion appears, no degree of vice can prevent it from softening our nature, and exciting our commiseration or pity; whereas, in its absence, no degree of virtue can affect or move us. Hence it is, that the evil characters in the *Paradise Lost*, are more interesting than the good characters. Throughout the *Paradise Lost*, says Mr. Payne Knight, “the infernal excite more interest than the celestial personages, because their

passions and affections are more violent and energetic.”\*

How then can it be maintained, that, for him who makes “no demand upon us for that more exquisite degree of sensibility which we find, and which we are mortified to find that we do not possess,† we are more apt to weep and shed tears,”—for him who thus appears to be placed totally above the influence of passion,—than for the man whose passions and frailties give him the strongest claim to our sympathy? It is surprising, at the same time, that Mr. Smith should say, “his firmness perfectly corresponds with our insensibility,” with that want of “sensibility which we find, and which we are sorry to find that we do not possess,” and say, a few lines after, that, “we are more apt to weep and shed tears,” for him, “than for those who give way to all the weaknesses of sorrow.” If we are insensible to his suffering,—if we find, to our mortification, that we possess no sensibility, how is it we happen “to weep and shed tears?” Is not this weeping, and are not

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\* Analytical Inquiry into the Principles of Taste.—P. 362.

† It is highly unphilosophic to suppose, that the want of any thing can mortify us, which is not natural to us ; and, considered in a moral point of view, the idea is unworthy the great Architect of Nature. The individual who regrets the want of any virtue, proves that the virtue is natural to his species, though not to himself.

these tears, some proof of sensibility? If we "make no effort, and have no occasion to make any, in order to conquer our sympathetic sorrow," for this stoic personage which Mr. Smith describes, how can we be told, that "we often struggle to keep down our sympathy with the misfortunes of others?" If we "are rather pleased with the sensibility of our own heart, and give way to it with complacency and self-approbation," how can it be affirmed, that "we give way to it only when we can no longer avoid it?" In a word, how can we be reproached with "our dull insensibility to the misfortunes of others," and of our "mortification" in discovering this insensibility?

Mr. Smith seems to have been led into all these inconsistencies from not distinguishing the conduct which a person in distress should pursue in presence of those, with whose dispositions towards him he is already acquainted, from that which he should observe in the presence of strangers. In the presence of the latter, I agree with him, that we sympathize more with the man who makes an effort to silence those violent emotions which agitate and distract him, than with him who whines and laments, and claims our sympathy before we have an opportunity of knowing who he is, or what he is, or whether his misfortunes be merited, and the just reward of his villainy, or have resulted from the machinations of the crafty against unguarded and unsuspecting innocence. It serves

no purpose, that he makes us acquainted with the sad history of his misfortunes : this knowledge, to have its proper effect upon us, must be derived from some other source. We know that, whether he tell us truth or falsehood, we cannot credit him without rendering ourselves liable to imposition, and this reflection destroys our sympathy. If he does not give himself a good character, we see no cause of sympathy : if he does, we instantly begin to suspect that the truth is not in him, because merit is seldom eloquent in its own praise : so that, let him act or speak as he will, he has equally little chance of exciting our sympathy, though it is possible for him to excite our pity. His only chance, therefore, is to remain silent, like those beggars whom we sometimes meet in the streets, who address us only by their looks, but whose expression and cast of countenance have frequently more eloquence in them than the suspected representations and rejected addresses of those who give the most pitiful history of their misfortunes.

But how erroneous is it to confound such people with those who address themselves to their friends and enemies. Such people, to act either consistently or naturally, must very evidently express their feelings and sentiments to each of them, not only differently from what they would towards strangers, but differently from each other. He who has a hundred friends, finds himself placed



in a different relation to each of them. Some are above him, some are his equals, and some rank below him in society. To each of those who are his superiors, he must express his feelings, sentiments, and grievances in a very different manner, because the degree of rank which they hold above him, are not only different, but the relations by which he is connected with them, are different also. Add to this, the knowledge he possesses of their tempers, characters, and degrees of sympathies. If it be inconsistent to expect, that he would treat them all in the same manner, and pay no regard, either to their natural tempers, or the relations in which he stands towards them, how much more must it be to expect, that he would treat them all, without distinction, like strangers with whom he is connected by no tie, or relation whatever. Let us grant him, then, as much greatness and magnanimity of mind as we will, he certainly acts contrary to the laws of human nature, and to the influences exercised over us by the different relations which connect us with different individuals, if he treat them all equally alike, if he hold himself equally independent of them all, claim no share in their sympathy, and pay no regard to the degrees of friendship or attention which he experienced from them, individually, from his first acquaintance with them to the present moment. If, to treat them all equally alike, and hold himself equally independent of them all, equally re-

ardless of their commiseration and sympathy, be, what Mr. Smith calls "magnanimity," I can only say, either that he is mistaken in his use of the term, or, that magnanimity is the most worthless, and the most despicable acquirement of the mind. I call it an acquirement, because nature could have never generated such a monster: it is the savage offspring of ingratitude and stoic apathy—that apathy which never felt the sweet communion of kindred feelings, which never sympathized in the woes of others. The same observations hold good with regard to our equals and inferiors, but particularly the former. To treat either of them like strangers, or to confound the relations by which we are connected with them, is to divest ourselves of all those influences and impressions which nature intended us to obey, and which we always do obey while we retain any vestige of the common nature of man.

But if, to act naturally, we must act differently towards all our friends and acquaintances, it is evident that our conduct towards those who are our enemies, or, in any manner accessory to our misfortunes, must be equally so. Indeed, the difference is here much greater than in the former case. It is only when the unfortunate man comes in contact with any of those who have been instrumental in leading him into distress, that those "violent bursts of passion," of which Mr. Smith

speaks, can properly break forth. To be silent on such an occasion, to look upon the cause and author of our misfortunes with perfect *sang froid*, to shew him that we neither claim his sympathy, nor feel sensible of the injuries which we have experienced at his hands, is not only contrary to the laws of our nature, but contrary to all those feelings and emotions that constitute true greatness and magnanimity of mind. He who does not act like a man, may call himself magnanimous if he will; but his magnanimity is the mere insensibility of a stoic. Magnanimity cannot be opposed to the laws of human nature; or, if it be, let it be no longer called a virtue. Every man should act according to the situation in which he is placed, and the influences which are exercised over him at the moment. "There is a time to laugh, and a time to cry," and he who can neither laugh nor cry at any time, who is always the same, in whatever situation he is placed, who yields to no influence, and tramples upon every impulse and law of his nature, may seek, as much as he please, to gain "the applause and admiration which he is about to deserve by the heroic magnanimity of his behaviour;" or, rather, the unmerited applause which Mr. Smith is willing to bestow upon him; but he must never hope to rank with those who, while they gain the esteem and admiration of the world, feel, alternately, all the

passions, emotions, and sympathies, which the circumstances and situations in which they are placed are calculated to excite.

In fact, he whose actions differ most from the general nature of man, is, of all others, the most unfit to excite sympathy or commiseration of any kind. In refusing, however, such a man our sympathy, we act justly and naturally, because such a man is a misanthropist. He who possesses the social virtues will always adhere closely to the manners of the world. We cannot differ essentially in our conduct from those for whom we have any regard, and to whom we find ourselves connected by the laws of a common nature. It is only he who looks down upon man with contempt, and who either regrets that he is of the same species, or believes himself possessed of some redeeming virtues that place him above them, that can divest himself of the social principle, and disregard every natural impulse by which they are governed. Such a man may deem himself a sage, a saint, or a philosopher; but the tragic poet who would bring him forward on the stage, and hope to astonish us by the severity and inflexibility of his virtues, can have little hope of success, or, at least, if he indulge such a hope, he will find himself disappointed. Dr. Blair, in his *Lecture on Tragedy*, has the following just and sensible observations on this subject.

“Mixed characters, such as we meet with in the world, afford the most proper field for displaying, without any bad effects on morals, the vicissitudes of life, and they interest us the more deeply, as they display emotions or passions which we have all been conscious of. When such persons fall into distress through the vices of others, the subject may be very pathetic; but it is always more instructive when a person has been himself the cause of his misfortune, and when his misfortune is occasioned by the violence of passion, or by some weakness incidental to human nature; such subjects both dispose us to the deepest sympathy, and administer useful warnings to us for our own conduct.”

On the whole, what is real magnanimity of character in the presence of strangers, is perfect stoicism and insensibility in the presence either of our friends or enemies. When Macduff hears that his wife and children are slaughtered in his absence, Shakspeare makes him express himself in all the bitterness of grief, and all the vindictiveness of resentment; but if Mr. Smith's theory of sympathy be well founded, he should have supported this misfortune without a murmur, as it is only by this “heroic magnanimity of behaviour” he could “deserve the applause and admiration” of mankind. Whether Shakspeare or Mr. Smith was the best judge, and whether we should sym-

pathise more with Macduff had he expressed neither grief nor resentment on hearing of the destruction of his wife and children, than we do at present, I leave the reader to determine.

If the distinction which I have made between the conduct proper to be observed by the victims of distress towards friends, enemies, and strangers, be founded in truth, it applies particularly to the theatre. Here every character addresses himself, to some person who is immediately or remotely related to him, either by accident or design. The audience is not supposed to be present, or, at least, every character acts and speaks as if there were no audience. All the parties, accordingly, attend only to their own mutual affections or antipathies, friendships or enmities; and, consequently, each of them should act or speak according to the influence of the moment, the situation in which he is placed, or the person or persons to whom he addresses himself. Mr. Smith's heroic magnanimity has, therefore, very seldom an opportunity of displaying itself on the theatre. The characters are composed of superiors, equals, or inferiors; and they have all some object in addressing each other. To remain uninfluenced by such an object,—to express their feelings and sentiments as if they were strangers to each other,—to spurn the sympathy of friends, and feel unmoved by the treachery of enemies, would, so far from being magnanimity, be the most hardened insensibility. According to Mr. Smith's

theory, no person can sympathise with Lear. He gives full vent to his passions as they rise in his mind, and evinces, throughout, a total want of that magnanimity which is "so divinely graceful." He makes no effort to suppress his feelings, or to conceal his griefs; and yet I am doubtful whether we should have sympathized more with him had he done so, than we do when we hear him unbosom himself in the following pathetic manner.

————— Filial ingratitude!

Is it not as if this mouth should tear this hand  
For lifting food to't? But I'll punish home;  
No, I will weep no more. In such a night,  
To shut me out! Pour on, I will endure.  
In such a night as this! O Regan, Gonerill,  
Your own kind father, whose frank heart gave all.  
O! that way madness lies; let me shun that;  
No more of that.

Whoever could hear Lear thus express himself without being affected, must be "fit for treasons, stratagems, and spoils." Yet there is not an expression that escapes him but shews his weakness, his want of fortitude to combat with the evils by which he was encompassed, his total want of that "magnanimity amidst great distress," that "immense effort to silence those violent emotions which naturally distract those in his situation;" in a word, of that command over himself, which alone, according to Mr. Smith, makes the most powerful appeal to our sympathy. If we are more apt to

weep and shed tears for such as seem to feel nothing for themselves than for those who give way to all the weakness of sorrow," why do we so entirely and completely sympathize with the weakness of Lear? Would our sympathy be greater if he had a more stubborn nature, a nature that rendered him insensible to the ingratitude of his children? I doubt it much, and so, I believe, would Mr. Smith, if the question had been put to him. In fact, if Lear had not so lively and acute a sense of his children's ingratitude, and if this sense had not taken such strong possession of his mind as to render him incapable of every manly effort to contend either with the passions by which he was distracted, or the difficulties by which he was surrounded, in a word, if he had not been the weakest of all men, and the best natured of all men, we would not sympathize with him as we do, more than with any other tragic character whatever. Lear is, perhaps, the greatest example of human weakness which stands upon record in the history of the stage. His good-nature was the effect of his weakness, or rather, perhaps, his weakness was the effect of his good-nature; for it is certain, that good-nature is seldom found connected with the sterner and more austere virtues, particularly with that magnanimity which is so graceful in the eyes of Mr. Smith. Good-nature is chiefly to be found in those weak, tender, and sympathetic minds,



whose happiness seems to consist in the happiness of others. It is this weakness, however, this tenderness, this good-nature, this "milk of human kindness," that appears, of all other virtues, the most amiable and the most interesting to us, and, consequently, we are less disposed to check our sympathies when we behold such virtue in distress. Whoever is most apt to indulge in sympathy for the woes of others, is also most apt to excite it for his own.

It is evident, then, that neither joy nor comedy imparts such heartfelt pleasure as we derive from Tragic representations,—from the luxury of sympathizing in sorrows not our own; and it is equally evident, that the softer affections of the heart are more pleasing, more attractive, and more apt to excite our sympathies, than the sterner and severer virtues, however high they may stand in the estimation of the world, and however calculated to excite our admiration and surprise. The latter virtues are generally the result of education or early associations, and may, therefore, be more properly called virtues of the head than of the heart; but the former are the offspring of nature alone, and cannot be eradicated from the heart of which they have once taken possession, though they may be considerably influenced and determined in their operations by the influence of education, situations, and circumstances.

## CHAP. VI.

*Examination of Mr. Burke and Mr. Knight's Theories.*

BURKE, in his "Sublime and Beautiful," has many just and profound observations on the source of Tragic Pleasure; but, like all other theories on the subject, the one which he has adopted applies not to the remote, original, but to the immediate, or proximate cause, or rather causes, of this pleasure. When I say they apply to the immediate or proximate causes, I do not mean that they unfold even these; but that he seems to have confined himself to what he considered the immediate agency which produced the effect. In the first place, he very justly rejects the supposition which makes this pleasure arise from "the comfort which we receive in considering, that so melancholy a story is no more than a fiction;" and he equally rejects that which makes it arise from "the contemplation of our own freedom from the evils which we see represented." The reasons which he assigns for

rejecting these theories are worth quoting. "I am afraid," he says, "it is a practice much too common, in inquiries of this nature, to attribute the cause of feelings which merely arise from the mechanical construction of our bodies, or from the natural frame and constitution of our minds, to certain conclusions of the reasoning faculty on the objects presented to us, for I should imagine, that the influence of reason, in producing our passions, is nothing near so extensive as it is commonly believed."

It is curious to perceive so profound and metaphysical a writer venturing to acknowledge his suspicions, that "the influence of reason, in producing our passions, is nothing near so extensive as it is commonly believed." Had Burke ventured a step further, and said decidedly, that reason had no influence whatever in producing our passions, he would have asserted a fact which no weight of authority could disprove, however bold and sceptical it might appear to those who have not learned to distinguish between reason and feeling. In fact, the only influence which reason possesses over our feelings, is that of moderating, or suppressing them altogether. Accordingly, a man who, while he witnesses a scene of distress, begins to reflect on his own happiness in being free from it, is infinitely less moved, and less interested in the fate of the suffering victim, than he who, while

he indulges in all those feelings which the scene before him is calculated to excite, makes no reflection whatever, but what unconsciously arises from his sympathy with the distressed.

Burke does not confine the pleasure derived from Tragic sources to the stage. Real distress, he thinks, is a source of still greater pleasure than the mere imitation of it; and hence he infers, that the nearer the imitation approaches the reality, the more powerful is its effect. In no case, however, does he admit imitative distress to produce equal pleasure with that which it represents. "Choose," he says, "a day to represent the most sublime and affecting tragedy we have; and appoint the most favourite actors, spare no cost upon the scenes and decorations; unite the greatest efforts of poetry, painting, and music; and when you have collected your audience, just at the moment when their minds are erect with expectation, let it be reported that a state criminal of high rank is to be executed in the adjoining square; in a moment the emptiness of the theatre would demonstrate the comparative weakness of the imitative arts, and proclaim the triumph of real sympathy."\* Here, then, the sole pleasure we receive is attributed to sympathy; but, as I have already shewn, so far as our pleasure is of a sympathetic

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\* Sublime and Beautiful, P. 1. Sec. xv.

character, this pleasure does not arise from a sympathetic emotion, but is the sympathetic emotion itself. But are we certain that this abandonment of the theatre is the effect of sympathy? Indeed, there seems to be very strong reasons for thinking otherwise; the strongest of which perhaps is, that people of the most tender and sympathetic natures are not those who go most frequently to witness executions. I believe there are few people of exquisite feelings who can endure such spectacles, and yet, where are we to look for sympathy if not among them? Besides, why is our propensity to behold executions so generally looked upon as a reproach to us, if it arise from sympathy? Why are even those who delight in such spectacles unwilling to avow their propensity? Why should we confide more in a person to whom such scenes are insupportable, than in him who goes to an execution with as keen an appetite as he does to his dinner? These, certainly, seem to be intuitive proofs, that we look upon such men as persons of no sympathy whatever. It is possible, however, as will hereafter appear, to possess sympathy, and yet feel inclined to witness executions; but it is not possible to possess it in any very high degree. Mr. Knight ascribes the abandonment of the theatre, in the case supposed by Burke, to curiosity, not to sympathy. "Would not the sudden appearance," he says, "of any very renowned foreign chief or

potentate in the adjoining square, equally empty the benches of the theatre? I apprehend that it would, and cannot but suspect, that even a bottle conjurer, a flying witch, or any other miraculous phenomenon of the kind, being announced with sufficient confidence to obtain belief, would have the same effect." It is extremely difficult to meet with a writer who can avoid contradicting himself; the moment he enters into the arena of polemics, simply, because in all our controversies, we are, in general, more desirous of victory, than of the elucidation of what is obscure, or the discovery of what is unknown. Mr. Knight takes every opportunity of opposing his own opinions to those of Burke, though it is difficult to conceive why he should have singled him out from all other writers on the subject of taste. He tells us himself, that his reason for exposing Burke's "philosophical absurdities" is, that they have "been since adopted by others, and made to contribute so largely to the propagation of bad taste." It would be difficult to point out any writer, whose philosophical principles are less calculated to promote "bad taste," than Burke's; for, as Mr. Knight himself acknowledges, "his *feelings* were generally *right*, even where his judgment was most wrong." A man's judgment, however, can never be wrong, where his feelings are right, unless he depart from them, and suffer his judgment to be directed by

that of others. This was not the case with Burke: he always thought for himself, and never submitted to the bondage of authority, except where authority and reason seemed to confirm each other. Burke, however, is frequently in error; but if I may now venture an opinion, which I shall prove in another place, Mr. Knight is more frequently so; and, what is worse, his errors are of a much more dangerous character, and more calculated "to contribute to the propagation of bad taste." This truth I hope to make evident in my work on the "Sublime and Beautiful;" not that I intend to advocate Burke's principles, nor yet, that I feel a desire to expose Mr. Knight's; but that truth requires of me to point out the different influences which the adoption of their systems would have on the cultivation of taste. I admire Mr. Knight's intellectual powers and energy; but he is always too rapid to be correct, and his feelings seem to be of too energetic a character to discriminate the lighter shades and more delicate affections of human nature, qualities which Burke possessed in a very eminent degree. In ascribing the abandonment of the theatre, in the present instance, to curiosity, Mr. Knight abandons the very first principle on which he founds Tragic pleasure. The fact is, that he sets out, like Burke, with ascribing the pleasure to sympathy; but the moment he came in contact with the latter, he forgot that he had ever

made sympathy the cause of the pleasure. He seems to have been under an impression, that Burke and he could never happen to think alike, or, rather, that whatever theory the former adopted, it must necessarily be erroneous, and that he, of necessity, was bound to adopt a different one. Accordingly, when he found Burke ascribing Tragic pleasure to sympathy, he contradicts him, and ascribes it to *curiosity*, forgetting, that he had, in the very preceding page, ascribed it to sympathy himself. I shall quote his own words. "When we see others suffer, we naturally suffer with them, though not in the same degree, nor even in the same modes; for those sufferings which we should most dread personally to endure, we delight to see exhibited, or represented, though not actually endured by others; and, *nevertheless, this delight certainly arises from sympathy.*" Who could think, that, in the very next page, he should attribute as much of the effect to curiosity as to sympathy, simply because he wished to break a lance with Burke? Indeed, from the instances he has given of the "bottle conjurer," and "flying witch," he appears to refer the entire of the effect to curiosity alone.

But what is this curiosity, to which Mr. Knight, and so many other writers, ascribe such wonderful effects? In my opinion, those who ascribe effects to curiosity, ascribe them to nothing at all; and if



so, they must necessarily be wrong, for *ex nihilo nihil fit*. Curiosity is either a feeling, an idea, or an act of volition within us, or it is something without us which creates feelings, ideas, or volitions within us. It must be one or other of these, because these embrace every thing in nature, of which we have any knowledge. Let us see, then, which of these it is, and we shall be better able to perceive, whether it be as prolific in its effects as it is generally supposed.

Curiosity cannot be volition, because we may will to do a good or an evil act, which we have done frequently before. This cannot be the effect of curiosity, because it has novelty always for its object. And even when we will to do something, or to see something, which we have never done or seen before, the propensity which impels us to it, is different from that act of mind which indulges the propensity, as this act may be exercised in opposition to, as well as in accordance with, the propensity. A man may will on the side of reason, as well as on the side of his propensities, when they happen to be at variance; so that he may will to do what he has no propensity or inclination to do; and he may will not to do, what he has a strong propensity for doing. If curiosity, then, be any thing within us, it must be a feeling, or an idea. Now, all our feelings and ideas are produced by something without us, for we cannot per-

ceive, unless there be something to be perceived ; and it is this something, consequently, that creates the perception, or idea, in us. Neither can we feel, unless there be something to make an impression upon us, so that, whether curiosity be a feeling or an idea, it must, in either case, be an effect produced by something without us. The effects, therefore, that are said to result from curiosity, should be attributed, not to any principle or faculty of our nature, which we designate by that name, but to the external influence by which it is produced. All our feelings, like that of curiosity, are simple effects, or impressions made upon us ; and, consequently, the causes by which they are produced, are the real causes of the influences which they possess over us. According to the degrees of energy with which these causes act upon us, we are, more or less powerfully prompted to action, so that the feeling which we call curiosity, is strong or weak according to the strength or weakness of the influence by which it is excited. This would not be the case, if curiosity were a principle or faculty in our nature which could act upon us, independently of any external influence. The fact is, that curiosity is the mere creature of chance : it is alive to day and dead to-morrow. Its existence depends on circumstances, and when these circumstances do not occur, curiosity is totally extinct. Why, then, do we attribute to curi-

osity, what we ought to attribute to the circumstance by which it is immediately excited? for, if this circumstance did not exist, neither would the curiosity be felt. The truth of these observations will appear obvious from the case before us. Mr. Knight says, that the report of “any very renowned foreign chief, or potentate, appearing in the neighbouring square, would equally empty the benches.” Now, if it be mere curiosity that empties the benches, the report of any foreigner having just come over, and appearing in the square, would produce the same effect, because the one would be as novel an object as the other. Yet, no person would quit the theatre to go see a person of whom he never heard any thing before, though it is obvious that such a person would be a more novel object than he of whom we had some knowledge by public report. The sight of a novel object has, therefore, little influence over us, so far as regards its mere novelty: it is some circumstance connected with the object, and of which we have already some knowledge, that creates the interest, and it is to this circumstance, not to the mere curiosity which it excites, that we must attribute the effect, or, in other words, the impression made upon us. The fact is, as will hereafter appear, that whatever produces a strong sensation in us, gives us pleasure, and therefore we feel no desire whatever of seeing a strange object, unless

we antecedently know, that this object is calculated to produce a strong sensation.

The pleasure which we derive from Tragic representations cannot, therefore, be attributed to curiosity or sympathy, both of which are modifications of feeling, produced by external influences, but to a certain law in our nature, that strongly attaches us to all powerful sensations, where the pleasure is not impeded by three circumstances, which shall be hereafter mentioned.

One of the instances produced by Burke himself, clearly shews, that this pleasure does not arise from sympathy. "This noble capital," he says, "the pride of England and of Europe, I believe no man is so strangely wicked as to desire to see destroyed by a conflagration, or an earthquake, though he should be removed himself to the greatest distance from the danger. But suppose such a fatal accident happened, what numbers from all parts would crowd to see the ruins, and amongst them many who would have been content never to have seen London in its glory." Surely, we cannot suppose, that those who would not wish to see London in its glory, would feel any sympathy on the occasion; but supposing they did, an alteration in the circumstance will prove, that they would run equally to see the ruins of London, where no sympathy could possibly excite them to it. Let us suppose, then, that the legislature

deemed it necessary to remove the seat of government to some other part of England, that they built another city, equal to it in extent and accommodation, that they removed all the inhabitants of London to this new city, and gave them the same rights, privileges, and advantages which they enjoyed before; that after having thus completed their views, they found it conducive to the national prosperity of the country to destroy London, and, accordingly, committed it to the flames, having first removed from it every thing of value, either to the nation at large, or to the citizens in particular: I would ask, whether, after every thing having been thus arranged for the general good, the ruins of London would not still be a spectacle capable of attracting thousands of spectators,—whether those who came to see it, in the case supposed by Burke, would not now come to see it also, though there could be no motive for sympathy whatever, as in this case, there is not an individual with whom we could sympathize. Every citizen is as happy as before, and, therefore, we have nothing to sympathize with but mute walls, demolished houses, and public buildings in ruins, which, as they can neither feel pain, nor respond to our sympathies, cannot, consequently, excite them. The pleasure, then, resulting from the view of these ruins could not be the effect of sympathy, nor, as I have already shewn, could it

be the effect of curiosity, for those who spent their life in London, and were perfectly acquainted with every street in it, would be more powerfully impelled to contemplate its ruins, than the ruins of some insignificant village which they never saw, or heard of before, though the latter must necessarily be a matter of greater curiosity to them than the former.

Neither curiosity nor sympathy, then, can be the cause or original source of Tragic pleasure. As Mr. Knight, however, forgetting that he had ever traced any part of this pleasure, either to sympathy or curiosity, adopts a new theory on the subject, it is but proper to enquire, whether, in ascending to a higher source, he has discovered that mysterious fountain, of which we are in pursuit.

After getting rid of sympathy and curiosity altogether, having, no doubt, forgot that he had attributed to them any portion of the pleasure arising from Tragic scenes, Mr. Knight adopts a theory, totally different from all his predecessors. His ideas on the subject seem to be perfectly original, at least I could discover no trace of them in any former writer. Originality has frequently some merit, even when it is unsupported by truth, for it requires not only considerable ingenuity, but a considerable exercise of mind to arrive at certain ideas, though they are ultimately found to be mere chimeras of the understanding. The ravings of a

man of genius are but little allied to mental imbecility. Mr. Knight's theory is ingenious, but this is its highest merit; for the feelings of which Tragic pleasure is composed, emanate from a much more general cause than that to which he traces them. The cause he assigns will certainly account for some portion of this pleasure, and so will each particular cause assigned by each particular writer on the subject; but, until we discover a cause that embraces all the causes by which it is produced, we can never discover the primary source of which we are in pursuit, and which alone will account for the aggregate of pleasures derived from Tragic representations, in the same manner as the general law of attraction, accounts for all the particular laws of motion. Before this general law was discovered, the theories of all the ancient philosophers, however ingenious, were unavoidably erroneous, and so must all theories be, whose bases are not as extensive as the superstructures which they uphold.

Mr. Knight derives the pleasure of which we are in search from "the energies and violent efforts displayed in feats of strength, courage, and dexterity, or the calm energies of virtue, called forth by the exertions of passive fortitude." He tells us this is the delight which the Romans took in the fights of gladiators, that it is still the source of our delight in cock-fighting, bull-bait-

ing, bull-feasts, and boxing-matches; and even traces to it our propensity to witness the execution of criminals. If particular instances of this kind could tend to confirm Mr. Knight's theory, he might adduce some hundreds more; but thousands of instances would be quoted to no purpose, if it can be shewn, that a part, at least, of the pleasure which we enjoy, cannot, by any torture of argument or of expression, be traced either to the active or passive energies of the mind. The fact, however, is, that if even this could not be shewn, than which nothing is easier, it will still be found, that we never sympathize, in any one instance, with energy alone, abstracted from the motives by which these energies are called into action; and that our sympathies are influenced by these motives a hundred-fold more than by the energies themselves.

- If a daring, active, and intrepid villain attack three men, and succeed by mere personal strength and dexterity to rob them, after a short scuffle, do all our sympathies and feelings arise from, or owe their existence to, the superior energies exerted by this desperado, and do we feel more pleasure in seeing him successful, than we would in seeing him defeated? I doubt whether any one could enjoy such a triumph, except a chip of the same block. We sympathize, then, not with energies alone, but with motives also; and the interest ex-



cited by the latter, is, beyond all comparison, greater than the former. This will appear still stronger, if we reverse the former case, and suppose three robbers to attack one honest man. If such an individual should prove successful against his adversaries, how strongly are our sympathies excited in his favour: we seem, by the force of sympathetic affection, to assist him in every exertion of strength which he puts forth: our very bodies are unconsciously put in motion; we recede at every blow that is made at him, as if aimed at ourselves; we incline forward when his adversaries bend beneath his strokes, and seem to invigorate his arm by exerting all the energies of our own. Every motion in his body produces a similar one in ours, without being in the least conscious of the offensive and defensive attitudes which we involuntarily assume by the force of sympathetic affection. The apparent cause of these strong sympathies, are the energies which he displays, but the least change in the circumstance convinces us, that they are not the real cause; for all our sympathy for him would immediately vanish, if we knew him to be a murderer or highwayman. Every change, consequently, in the motives, produces a corresponding change in our feelings, so that our sympathies are but little influenced by energies or exertions, considered abstractedly by themselves.

If we imagine, however, that we have now a

clue to the cause of our pleasure, and that all arises from the motives that call our energies into action, we will find ourselves mistaken, and that, as Lord Kaimes expresses it, on a different occasion, "the variety of nature is not so easily reached." The motives that engage men in action have not greater influence over us, than the circumstances in which they are placed; a fact which will immediately appear, if we only change the latter, without making any change in the former. If all our pleasure arise from the motives, it is obvious, that while they remain unchanged, no alteration of circumstances can disturb it; but, as every change of circumstance increases or diminishes the impressions which we feel, though the motives remain unchanged, our sympathies cannot be solely referred either to the motives or to the circumstances, but to the combined influence of both.

If a robber attack three boys, how much stronger is the interest we take in their fate, than in that of three men who should happen to be placed in their situation, though the motive by which the robber was actuated in attacking both, was identically the same, namely, to strip them of whatever they possessed, and though the motives by which the boys would be actuated to defend themselves would be the same with the men, namely, the preservation of their lives and property. If, instead of boys, three aged men, or three helpless females,

were attacked, the impressions would assume a new character in each; and, in all these cases, the impressions made by the energies exerted, considered without regard to the circumstances or motives, would be scarcely worth taking into consideration.

I am also inclined to think, that Mr. Knight is mistaken in some of the instances which he has quoted in support of his theory, though, if they had been all correct, they would have proved nothing, for the reasons I have just now assigned. He says, we delight in executions, only because we "all delight in beholding exertions of energy, and all feel curiosity to know in what modes or degrees those exertions can be displayed under the awful circumstances of impending death." The only energy that can be displayed by him who is entering upon eternity, is mental energy, or, what Mr. Knight calls "passive fortitude;" for physical energies are only exerted by him who hopes to derive some advantage from the exertion. But mere resignation has not the attraction of bringing thousands together; and it might be impossible to distinguish, in the human countenance, the fortitude or resignation of a man condemned to death, from that of a man who lost his entire property at law. If the resignation of both proceed from religious impressions, it would present the same calm and tranquil aspect in each; yet no

one would go a hundred paces to witness the passive fortitude of the one, while thousands would go miles to witness the final exit of the other. It is not, then, a display of mental fortitude that induces us to visit an execution, but the awful and powerful sensations produced by the circumstances in which the criminal is placed, and the terrific associations with which it is eternally connected. If the fortitude to which Mr. Knight alludes be a hardened contempt of death, I trust there are few who would sympathize with such blasphemous heroism.

The energies of active and passive fortitude are so far from being sufficiently general to support Mr. Knight's theory, that he is obliged to extend the application of the term to quite an opposite meaning, so that energy becomes, in his hands, something with which we are quite unacquainted. "It matters not, indeed," he says, "whether these energies be displayed in suffering or acting:" accordingly, he makes tender love as energetic as the atrocious ambition of Lady Macbeth. I suspect Mr. Knight is mistaken in considering love to be an energy; or energy and suffering to be at all allied with each other. There can be no energy in yielding to an impression made upon us; for the impression is made, and the emotion which it produces felt, without our act or consent. The passion of love is excited in

us, not by energies of our own, but by the presence of the object which produces the impression; and, so far is the passion from requiring any energy or effort on our part, that we are frequently unable to resist it. The only energy we can exert in a love affair, is that of resisting the passion; for, in yielding to it, there can be none required: on the contrary, it frequently baffles all our energies to resist it; and if that be called an energy which we cannot avoid, and which forces itself upon us, whether we will or will not, it is certainly an energy not in us, but in that invisible power which not only triumphs over us, but enchains all the energies which we are capable of exerting against it. I agree, indeed, with Mr. Knight in calling fortitude, in suffering, an energy; but I cannot agree with him in calling it "passive fortitude," for to call any thing passive an energy, is a contradiction in terms. He has been led into this mistake from not distinguishing between misfortune, and its influence on the mind. The man of fortitude yields to misfortune as well as the coward, when he can no longer resist it; but then he does not yield to its influence. The coward yields to both, and is, therefore, perfectly passive. But he who supports the same equanimity of mind in adversity as in prosperity, cannot be passive, because it requires the greatest energies of which human nature is capable to resist the influence of adversity so com-

pletely as to preserve the soul calm and unruffled amidst the severe trials to which it is exposed.

The adoption of an erroneous theory generally leads a writer into inconsistencies and arguments that destroy each other: while he has his eye attentively fixed on the theory which he seeks to establish, all his arguments quadrate with each other, and though they are erroneous, they are systematically so; but in a treatise of any length, the mind cannot be so vigilant as to attend always to the main proposition or propositions, on which the whole theory rests; and when this happens, it is apt to glide insensibly into truth and nature, not aware that this adoption of truth is either subversive of the doctrine which it seeks to establish, or at least, that it leads to conclusions which must necessarily expose the fallacy on which it rests. Mr. Knight, for whose correct taste and critical discrimination I profess the highest respect, overturns the entire of his theory on the Source of Tragic Pleasures, by an admission which he unwarily made in commenting on a passage in Aristotle. "In tragedy," he says, "it is not the actual distress, but the motives for which it is endured, the exertions which it calls forth, and the sentiments of heroism, fortitude, constancy, or tenderness, which it, in consequence, displays, that produce the interest, and awaken all the exquisite and delightful thrills of sympathy." Here, then, we

find many other sources of Tragic Pleasure, besides the exertion or energy which distress calls forth; and, what is completely subversive of all that he has written on the subject, these sources lead us to innumerable others, in which no trace of energy can be discovered. If, according to himself, sentiments of heroism, fortitude, constancy, and tenderness, be sources of Tragic Pleasure, so must also sentiments of generosity, pity, resignation, mildness, sensibility, sympathy, sublimity, fear, hope, joy, sorrow, and all the passions that ever agitated the human breast. Instead, then, of confining Tragic Pleasures to the display of strong energies, innumerable other sources are disclosed to us, from which this pleasure may proceed, in many of which, the characteristic feature is absence of energy, as fear, mildness, sorrow, resignation, and all the passive affections of the human breast. Besides, if it be not the actual distress that moves us, but the motives for which it is endured, what energy can there be in motives? All motives have their existence independent of us. If I go and fight the enemies of my country, my motive for doing so is to defend its rights and liberties against foreign usurpation; but this motive has its existence independent of me, and would continue to exist whether I fought or staid at home. I was not accessory to the attempt made on the liberties of my country: it was not brought about

by my contrivance; and therefore I had no concern in it; but still it is the motive that leads me to action, and it would be a motive even though I neglected to perform the duty which it required at my hands. There can be no energy, then, in motives, because there is nothing in them in which we can claim a share, and, consequently, the interest which they excite cannot be ascribed to energy. Mr. Knight himself admits this truth afterwards, not reflecting, that it was in direct opposition to what he here asserts. His theory, as we have already seen, consists in deriving all our Tragic Pleasures from the display of strong energies or exertions; and to do this more effectually, he tells us, that the interest excited in many of the scenes in Shylock, does not arise from his hatred or malignity, but the energies which resulted from them. The pleasure, then, does not arise from the cause, but from the effect; though we are told above, that it is not the effect, but the cause or motives that awaken our sympathies. A similar contradiction occurs where Mr. Knight traces the pleasure we derive from witnessing executions, not to the sufferings endured, in which, he says, "we take no delight, but to the heroism or gallantry of the person executed." How can we reconcile this to the assertion, that "it is not the actual distress, but the motives for which it is endured, that produce the interest." At one time we are told it is the



motive that affects us ; at another, that it is the heroism and energy elicited by the motive. Such are the inconsistencies that necessarily cling to all erroneous theories.

I know of no theory that can account for the interest excited by Lear's madness. It is not, surely, the energy which it displays that produces this interest, for it was the result of weakness, not of energy. Had Lear more fortitude of mind to endure his misfortunes, he would not have yielded to lunacy, and, therefore the most strained reasoning cannot associate it with energy or heroism of mind. Yet, it is infinitely more interesting than the heroism of Macbeth, and even in the latter, it is not his courage or heroism that affects us at all, but the strong agitation of mind to which he was constantly a victim. Is there any thing in all Macbeth that excites a deeper interest than the following celebrated passage ?

Is this a dagger which I see before me,  
The handle towards my hand ? Come let me clutch thee :  
I have thee not, and yet I see thee still.  
Art thou not, fatal vision, sensible  
To feeling as to sight ? Or art thou but a  
A dagger of the mind ; a false creation,  
Proceeding from the heat-oppressed brain ?  
I see thee yet in form as palpable  
As this which now I draw.  
Thou marshall'st me the way that I was going ;  
And such an instrument I was to use.

..... I see thee still,  
And on thy blade and dudgeon, gouts of blood,  
Which was not so before.

Here the whole interest is excited by the fears and terrors of Macbeth; for how attribute energy to a man whose fears create images or instruments of destruction, that existed only in his own mind? Yet these fears are more interesting to us than the boldest display of personal courage and mental energy, or the noblest descriptions of the "dignity of human nature."

## CHAP. VII.

*Whether imaginary, produce, at any time, a more powerful impression than real, distress? and, if so, under what circumstances can such an effect take place?*

I HAVE had several times occasion to observe, that the emotions produced by real objects, circumstances, and situations, and consequently, by real distress, are more intense—more strongly felt—than those caused by objects or circumstances that owe their existence to the mind. In the foregoing chapter, however, I called the universality of this assertion into doubt, and shewn, that it is not sympathy that induces us to abandon the theatre in order to witness an execution. It will, therefore, be proper to examine this subject a little farther, and ascertain, whether imaginary distress produce, at any time, a more intense sensation than that which arises from real suffering. If so, it will be necessary to ascertain when, and under what particular circumstances, the copy makes a more powerful impression than the original. The

first part of our enquiry can be determined by experience alone, and admits of no reasoning whatever. If we discover, from our own feelings, that imaginary distress produces, at any time, a more powerful sympathy than real suffering, no speciousness of reasoning can disprove the fact: if sympathy with the latter, be invariably felt the stronger, all arguments would be absurd, that would attempt to prove the contrary. Feeling, and feeling only, can decide in both cases. What, then, do our feelings tell us?

“A prince,” says the author of *Lettres sur l’Imagination*, “not less distinguished by the sweetness of his character, and the amiability of his mind, than by his passion for the fine arts, observed to me lately, without being able to accuse me, I believe, of being less sensible than others, “I am frequently dissatisfied with myself, in finding that I am more keenly affected by a beautiful Tragic scene, or fine piece of music, than I would have been by the very misfortune which this composition pictured to my mind, or of which it expressed the sentiments.” The author of this little elegant work confesses to his friend, that he found himself frequently affected in a similar manner; and so, I believe, will all people admit, who are in the habit of consulting, at the moment, or subsequently calling to mind their feelings upon such occasions.

With what indifference, and absence of sym-

pathy, do we read in the public papers of general engagements, massacres, &c. The news of the battle of Waterloo was heard, in this country, with a great deal of interest; but it was not an interest arising from sympathy with the sufferers. It produced a strong, public sensation, arising, partly from the glory which the nation acquired from it; partly from the satisfaction which it created in reflecting on the public, and, consequently, the individual advantages which would arise from being rid of an expensive and perilous war; partly from the greatness and suddenness of the event; partly from the important changes which it was expected to make in the political, commercial, and agricultural aspect of Europe; partly from the particular modes of thinking of the different individuals whom it affected, the changes which these great, public revolutions would produce in their particular situations, relations, and interests,—the increase or decrease of influence, wealth, and power, which was likely to result from it, to each of them individually; and, in particular instances, partly from influences, associations, situations, and circumstances, which can be specified only by those who were placed in, or affected by, them. In all this co-operation of causes and circumstances, sympathy had no share. The deaths of so many brave men excited only a general feeling of regret, for sympathy can be excited only by mental in-

fluences, or, to explain myself more clearly, we sympathize not with sensible appearances where they are unconnected with mind. If I meet a person who lies beaten and wounded in a most cruel manner, on the road, I may pity, but I cannot sympathize in his sufferings, while there is nothing to excite my sympathy but mere wounds and bruises. I must first know something of the man's mind and disposition ;—I look in his face ;—I watch the expression of his countenance to see if I can recognize, from the manner in which he endures his sufferings, the character of his mind. This I can do, sometimes, from a single look ; but it must be the look of him who deserves my sympathy. There is an expression,—an eloquence in the countenance of a virtuous and well disposed mind, which the man who is imbued with no sense of virtue, no softness or amiability of feeling, can ever assume in such situations. In our great commerce with the world, we are frequently imposed upon by those who assume a character that does not belong to them ; but this they can do only while the mind is at ease, and not even then, until they are long practised in the art of assuming virtues which they do not feel. The mask falls off, however, and their mimic powers entirely fail them, when they are thrown into situations that powerfully affect the mind, as distress, danger, persecution, &c. Nature, then, has its

way, in spite of them ; and the evil spirit which so long remained latent, makes its appearance, whether they consent to it or not. It is only while the mind is calm and collected, that the hypocrite can wear his mask, and conceal his true nature ; but, in the moment of passion, he betrays himself, because, in these moments, no man has power over his own nature, and it will appear in all its native beauty or deformity. When I say native beauty, it may be thought, that the passions of all men, the virtuous as well as the vicious, put on the same appearances, and are equally reprehensible. To think so, however, is not to think correctly. No passion can be reprehensible, if it be that which the influence, by which it was excited, was calculated to excite ; and, hence it is, that the same moral influences never excite the same passions in virtuous and vicious minds. An evil-disposed mind is stung with envy, when he beholds his neighbour advancing in the world by honest industry ; and, so far from promoting, he takes every opportunity of retarding his exertions ; but a well-disposed mind feels the very contrary passion to envy ; and, so far from retarding, he feels a real pleasure when any opportunity is offered him of promoting his views. The passion of envy, therefore, which is felt by the former, becomes reprehensible, from its not being that passion which the cause that produced it was cal-

culated to excite. The same moral influences, therefore, never excite the same passions in good and evil dispositions: the passions which they excite in the latter are always criminal, because, so far from being the natural effects of the causes by which they are produced, they are perfect monsters in the moral world; while, the passions which they excite in the former, so far from being criminal or reprehensible, from the mere circumstance of their being passions, are the most perfect fruits of virtue. In the moments of passion, therefore, we can always distinguish the good from the evil-minded man, if we can only ascertain the cause by which his passion is excited.

It is true, that the virtuous and the vicious, the honest and the dishonest man, may be agitated by the same individual passion; but we shall always find, that it is never produced in them by the same moral cause; for, with regard to physical causes, they generally produce the very same passions, sensations, and emotions, in all men—the virtuous as well as the vicious. Place both on the summit of a lofty mountain, and they are struck with the same sublime and elevated emotions. When I say *same*, I do not mean same in the degree, but in the character, of the emotion; for though the emotion felt by both is strictly sublime, it is always more sublime in a virtuous than in a vicious mind, provided he possesses, from nature



and education, the same expansion of intellect. Sublimity always carries a virtuous mind to the contemplation of a first cause,—a contemplation which has no charm to an ill-disposed mind, and from which, consequently, it loves to withdraw its attention. In all respects, however, except in the degree, physical causes produce the same emotions in all men, whatever be their passion for, or aversion from, virtue. Place these two men, not on a mountain, but on the sharp summit of a steep, tremendous precipice, and the sublime emotion is instantly fled. Both feel equally unconscious of it, and equally conscious of fear and terror, not that the situation is less sublime than the former, for it is infinitely more so, but that the sensation of fear being the predominant sensation, totally seizes the mind and prevents it from attending to the emotion of sublimity. The weaker sensation is always lost in the stronger. Though the agency of physical causes, however, always produces the same commotions, emotions, and passions, in the minds of all men, the virtuous as well as the vicious, the agency of moral causes produces them totally different; and, therefore, whenever we find a good and an evil man agitated by the same passion, we may feel confident that it does not proceed from the same moral cause in both. An honest man, if he be cheated of a farthing, falls instantly into a passion, not that he regards the farthing, but that the slightest

appearance of dishonesty, produces an instinctive irritation in him which he cannot suppress, while the villain, who spends his life in defrauding others is angry, not when he is imposed upon, but when he fails in imposing upon others, or when he loses his prey by some neglect on the part of his associates. He is not put into a passion by being cheated himself, though he will have satisfaction if he can; but, as he has no virtuous feeling of his own, the abandonment of it in others, gives him no farther concern than that of guarding against it. If he succeed in cheating them first, he does not consider himself a greater rogue, but a cleverer man; but, if success be on their side, he is vexed, not with them, but with himself, for not being more watchful. His anger, therefore, arises from an attachment to vice, the honest man's anger from an attachment to virtue; so that, in this and in all other cases, where the upright and the unrighteous man are agitated by the same passion, arising from moral causes, we shall always find, that the causes producing it are different from each other. Anger, then, in the virtuous man, is a virtue, in the vicious man, it is a vice, which easily explains that command in the gospel, "*be angry, but sin not.*" This is generally understood to be a pardon, not a license for anger; as if it said, be not angry if you can, but if you cannot controul your nature, at least, let not your passion induce you to sin.

To me, it appears a perfect command to yield, without the slightest resistance, to our anger, whenever it arises from an attachment to virtue, and an abhorrence of vice. Not to feel angry with the man who violates, in our presence, the most sacred principles of virtue, is, evidently, a proof that we have no particular zeal for it, and that it would not be difficult to make us act ourselves like those whose actions we can witness without indignation or passion.

It is not, however, in their causes alone that the anger of a virtuous, differs from that of an unprincipled, mind. Their modes of operation are not less different than the causes in which they originate. Virtue possesses a secret power of making itself known, even in the height of passion; while vice, unconsciously, flings aside the veil which conceals its turpitude in its calmer moments. In distress and poverty, it is true, our pity tends very considerably to render us less observant of those external signs which disclose the real character of the mind, and, consequently, renders us more liable to be deceived; but, whether we be deceived or not, we can never sympathize with, though we may pity, a distressed object, until we first perceive, or imagine we perceive, some quality of mind, or trait of character, or of feeling, which we either possess ourselves, or esteem in others. Where we have no opportunity of discovering any portion

of the distressed object's character, of ascertaining his natural propensities and affections, we find it impossible to sympathize. Hence, neither the reports of battles, general engagements, pillage, devastation, nor even the destruction of an entire nation, can excite sympathy in the most sympathetic mind. *amused* ~~Terror, consternation, and pity,~~ *these* are the only feelings excited by such relations, simply because the mind, character, disposition, virtues, and frailties of each individual sufferer, is entirely kept out of sight. It is with feelings only that we can sympathize; and, therefore, when the sufferer's feelings are not made known to us, we are incapable of sympathy. If we know a person's general character, and the degree of sensibility which he naturally possesses, we can sympathize in his sufferings the moment we hear of them, even though the person who relates them, merely describes the situation in which he is placed, because, from our previous knowledge, we easily guess how he feels affected in such a situation, and we enter, accordingly, into his feelings. Hence it is, that if the same misfortune happen to any two of our friends, who are equally dear to us, our sympathy for them will, by no means, be determined by our equal attachment to them. For the one we may not feel at all, while the other excites the most tender and heart-rending sympathy, though our attachment to both is the same. This will always be the

case, where the one possesses a strong and unbending mind, fitted, not only to endure, but to surmount misfortunes, and the other, a delicacy and tenderness of feeling that shrinks, like the sensitive plant, from the slightest touch. We know how much more unfortunate the one is than the other, and our sympathy always keeps pace with the uneasiness and anxiety of feeling which we believe him to endure. As it is with feelings, then, we sympathize, not with the situation of the sufferer, we can feel no sympathy until we ascertain, or be enabled to form some opinion of, the state of the sufferer's feelings.

Our sympathy is never determined by what we think the sufferer ought to feel ; for, if it were, we should feel the same for all men placed in similar situations. Experience tells us we do not, and, that while we are quite insensible to the situation of one man, we are greatly affected by that of another, though the situation of both are exactly the same. We are so constituted by nature, that we cannot avoid sympathizing with any person whom we see greatly affected, even though we should ourselves be scarcely moved by the circumstance that affects him. We know his feelings arise from weakness,—from possessing a nature easily moved ; but this weakness, so far from checking our sympathy, only increases it, so that we never take into consideration how much a person

ought to feel, but how much he does feel; and, it is with this latter feeling we always sympathize. This is so true, that he who does not feel at all, who is perfectly unmoved by the situation in which he is placed, creates no sympathy in us whatever, though it is a situation that would greatly affect us, if a sensitive mind were placed in it.

From these observations, it is obvious, that distress and sufferings affect us, only in proportion as we are made acquainted with the feelings of the sufferer. It is true, we may be mistaken in the ideas which we form of his feelings; but, it is equally true, that our sympathy for him is entirely determined by these ideas. If we imagine that he feels more affected than he really does, so also do we sympathize with him more than we ought. There can, therefore, be no sympathy with real distress, where no idea is conveyed of the state of mind or feelings which accompany it; whereas, imaginary distress affects us exceedingly, where a tender and pathetic scene of feeling is described, the writer not confining himself to the mere situation in which the sufferer is placed. Hence, then, whenever the writer of fiction describes the feelings produced by the situation in which his characters are placed, or makes us so well acquainted with their tempers and dispositions, that we can always place ourselves in their situation, and imagine those feelings which the writer does not choose

to describe, he is sure of affecting us more strongly than he who, in describing real distress, confines himself to circumstances, situations, and events, without noticing the complication of feelings and passions arising from them. It is only in this case that imaginary excites a stronger sympathy than real distress; but where the description of the latter is accompanied by those delineations of feeling and passion, which give to fiction all its interest, the victim of real distress will always excite stronger sympathy than the victim of imaginary woes. The writer of fiction, however, has an advantage over him who relates only that of which he was himself a spectator. The latter describes only what is real; if he describe more, it is fiction. Confined, therefore, to rigid truth, he cannot render any situation, or state of feeling, more interesting or affecting than it really is, while the writer of fiction may make it as interesting and pathetic as he pleases. Hence, it seldom happens, (and it is even doubtful whether it can happen,) that we meet with a case of real distress as pathetic and interesting as that which the poet is capable of imagining; but, if such a case were to occur, and delineated with the same happiness of description, it would create an interest which no fiction of the imagination could ever excite.

## CHAP. VIII.

*All strong sensations pleasing to those by whom they are felt, three instances only excepted.*

HAVING shewn that every writer who has hitherto attempted to discover the source of the Pleasures arising from Tragic Representations rests his theory on some erroneous principle, it now remains to be shewn, what the true source of these pleasures are. In doing so, I must premise, that no man shall ever be able to tell, why pleasure should result from any source whatever. All the knowledge we possess of emotions, is derived from our feelings. When we feel an emotion to be pleasing, we *know* it is so, simply because we *feel* it is so, but antecedent to this feeling we know nothing. Philosophy will never enable us to tell, why a beautiful woman produces a pleasing, and a deformed woman, a disagreeable emotion. Our feelings inform us of it, and if they withheld the intelligence, we could derive it from no other source. There is



nothing, then, to instruct us on the subject but our feelings ; but they can only make us acquainted with the fact. They point out the cause or agency by which pleasure is produced, but they can never shew, by what act or faculty the cause or agency produces the effect. The philosophers, however, who have set about discovering why Tragic Representations produce pleasure, seem to have taken it for granted, that they know, already, why Comic Representations produce it. A moment's consideration would have convinced them, at the same time, that they can no more tell why the latter should produce pleasure than the former, or than Newton could why heavier bodies attract the lighter. It is absurd, then, to suppose, that he who cannot explain how Comedy is a source of pleasure, should succeed in explaining how Tragedy produces that effect. Philosophers have long laboured to discover in what beauty consists ; but without success ; and yet, it is certain, that if they even succeeded, they would still be at a loss to tell by what agency it imparted pleasure. We must, therefore, refer the laws of feeling, as Newton did the laws of attraction, to the will of the Creator, by whom we are so constituted, that certain external appearances, and the display of certain mental affections in others, produce certain emotions in us. Why they do so, we cannot tell, without having recourse to this law, because we

cannot tell, why they should produce an emotion in us at all. This knowledge we derive from our own consciousness, not from the reasonings of philosophers; for there is no reasoning on the subject. That we are not in the least indebted to reason for the knowledge we possess of our feelings and emotions, appears sufficiently evident from this circumstance alone, that we cannot, by any process of reasoning, discover, why external influences should produce emotions in us of any kind; and, therefore, if we were to judge by reason, we should deny the existence of influences and emotions altogether. It would, consequently, be as difficult to tell, why music is pleasing, as why Tragic Representations are so. The only difference is, that we think one is self-evident, and the other mysterious; but when we go more deeply into the subject, we find our mistake, and that one is as mysterious as the other. Hence it is evident, that those who ascribe the pleasures resulting from Tragic Representations to causes that are not tragic, would be as nonplussed to tell, why these causes should give pleasure, as why Tragic Representations themselves should produce that effect.

The origin of our feelings, then, is not a proper subject for philosophical investigation: we can easily discover what things please us, but why they please, shall ever remain a mystery. All our observations on the subject are mere notices of facts,

the causes of which exist in our own nature, but admit of no explanation. Until we know what the nature of soul or spirit is, we shall never know, why any external or material agency should be pleasing to it. The reason is obvious:—matter is something which we *profess* to know, (whether we know it or not is a question that belongs not to our present subject), spirit, something which no man pretends to know : it is absurd, then, to attempt to explain, how the something which we do know, produces a certain effect in the something which we do not know ; for, to be acquainted with the manner in which an effect takes place, we must be acquainted with the nature of the thing which acts, and of the thing which is acted upon. Reasoning from the progress which human inquiry has made in ascertaining the properties of immaterial being, we shall never become acquainted with the nature of spirit ; and, if not, we shall never succeed in discovering, why it is pleased with any external agency.

But though we cannot perceive why any immediate or proximate cause should produce the effect that follows it, yet we know, that this immediate cause is not the real, original cause by which the effect is produced, and that it is itself a mere instrument in the hands of some higher cause. When we come to examine this higher cause, however, we find *it*, again, set in action by something else,

and that it is as much an instrument of this something, as the immediate cause by which the ultimate effect is produced. From a conviction that the instrument which produces any effect or change, or which sets another, or, perhaps, a thousand other instruments at work, is not still the real cause of all these effects and changes, and that this real cause must be that which makes use of this instrument,—which acts of itself, sets all the subordinate instruments in action, and is not itself acted upon by any thing, we naturally wish to travel beyond all these instrumental causes, to find out that primary cause by which all the effects are produced, and by which all the instrumental causes are put into motion. This primary cause, however, eludes all our researches, and the most we can ever expect to discover, is the immediate instrument which it makes use of, and which produces the ultimate effect by subordinate instruments.

This instrument we call a general law of nature, because we find, that all the subordinate instruments, or, as we usually call them, secondary causes, can be traced to this general law. We also call it the original cause, as we call gravitation the original cause of motion; but in this we err, for gravitation, like all other original causes that have ever been discovered, is a mere instrument, by which some higher cause puts all the subordinate principles of motion into action. Gravita

tion is a mere quality, or propensity of matter, by which certain effects are produced ; but this propensity did not cause itself, and it is, therefore, to the agent which caused the propensity, we should attribute all the effects that result from it. The reader must, therefore, perceive, that in tracing the pleasure derived from Tragic Representations, to their original source, I do not mean, or pretend to discover, that real, original cause which I have now explained, but that immediate instrument which it makes use of, to set in action all the other instruments, by which the ultimate pleasure is produced. In a word, I seek to discover that general law in our nature, to which all the subordinate causes of Tragic Pleasure can be traced, though this general law, or original cause, as it is called, will appear, when discovered, only the effect of some higher cause, to the knowledge of which the pretended perfectibility of the human reason can never attain. Instead of deploring this ignorance, however, perhaps we have reason to exclaim with Pope,

Oh ! blindness to the future ! kindly given,  
That each may fill the circle marked by heaven :  
Who sees with equal eye, as God of all,  
A hero perish, or a sparrow fall,  
Atoms and systems into ruin hurled,  
And now a bubble burst, and now a world.

The pleasures derived from Tragic Representations will appear, from the facts and reasonings stated in the following pages, to arise from a law

in human nature, that renders not only all emotions and passions, from whatever source they arise, or whatever be their character, but, also, all strong sensations that agitate and rouse the feelings, or exercise the imagination, pleasing to those by whom they are felt, except, first; sensations that are too long continued; secondly, sensations whose intensity produces actual pain; and thirdly, sensations that affect us, not as men in general, but as individuals, placed in particular situations, and, consequently, subject to influences not arising from the general laws of nature.

If this attachment to strong sensations, emotions, and passions, be found an original law of our nature, it will follow, *a priori*, that Tragic Representations must produce pleasure, because the object of Tragic writers is, invariably, to produce these powerful impressions in the human mind. The reader, however, will bear in mind, that whenever I speak of strong sensations being pleasing, I mean strong sensations qualified as above.

To commence, then, with the pleasures arising from strong emotions: I must observe, that all the faculties of the mind, life, and its endlessly diversified enjoyments, consist in *sensation*, *abstraction*, and *will*; the former of which is a passive, and the two latter, active faculties of the soul. These are the only faculties of soul or mind with which we are acquainted; for, however metaphysicians may

divide and sub-divide the intellectual powers, they are resolvable into these three. The will is wholly engaged in regulating the enjoyments and desires of the other faculties. These, again, are found at perpetual war with each other, and, in proportion as one ascends, the other descends in the scale of enjoyment. He who prefers the enjoyment of reflection, by which I mean all mental enjoyments,—all enjoyments which proceed from an exercise of the mind, as abstraction, contemplation, reasoning, comparing, analyzing, and every active operation of the percipient faculty ;—he who prefers these enjoyments to gratifications arising from sensibility and feeling, seldom listens to the solicitations of the senses, or the wanderings of imagination ; and, from seldom listening to them, from seldom gratifying them, he so completely reduces them to subjection, that he may be said to annihilate them altogether. A man of a contemplative, philosophic mind, instead of yielding to an impression made upon him by the senses, instead of running after the enjoyment which it promises, begins immediately to ask himself how this impression happened to be made upon him, by what agency it was produced, through what *media* it communicated itself to the soul, what the nature of that thinking and feeling thing is, on which the impression is made, by what constitution of being it is capable of feeling the impression, and by what opera-

tion of being it is afterwards capable of reflecting on this feeling. These reflections lead to a train of others, so that, while the philosopher is buried in contemplation, the impression dies of itself, and the enjoyment after which it thirsted is forgot, or, if remembered, remembered without any desire of attaining it. The impression, and the anticipated enjoyment, are no longer feelings in his mind, but mere perceptions of feelings that once existed there. If the impression should, at some future time, be revived, and invite the philosopher to the same enjoyment, the philosophy which extinguished it before, will find it much easier now to re-produce the effect ; for, as every circle produced by a stone, thrown into the water, is weaker than that which preceded it, so does a subdued appetite return with less and less violence, till, at length, it dies of itself, and leaves no trace behind. He who has brought himself to this stage of sensual denial, may be pronounced incapable of any enjoyments, but what are of a mental character ; so that, in proportion as the enjoyments of the intellect are exclusively indulged, in the same proportion are the enjoyments of the senses trampled upon and despised. I admit, then, *in limine*, that philosophers, metaphysicians, and all abstract reasoners, find no enjoyment in strong sensations, and that the only pleasures of which they are capable, are those which result from the satisfaction of discovering



something, hitherto unknown. So far, then, as regards them, the theory which ascribes the pleasures arising from Tragic Representations to a propensity in human nature of being pleased with strong sensations, emotions; and passions, is not supported by experience; but do not the rest of mankind derive their happiest moments from this source alone? The question, then, is, whose pleasures are the most natural, the philosopher's or the poet's; the logician's or the clown's; or, in other words, which are, the pleasures of reason, or the pleasures of sense, the most natural? To me it appears obvious, that the latter are not only more natural, but that they are nature itself; while the *exclusive* enjoyment of the pleasures of reason are neither natural nor desirable, except when they are impressed with the character of the senses and of imagination, their lineal offspring. They are not natural; because, he who has extinguished all the sensitive appetites, has also extinguished one of the three faculties of the soul, and confined the operation of another to half the range appointed for it by nature. The three faculties of the soul are, sensation, perception, and will; the former of which he destroys, so far as regards the enjoyments which it imparts. It is true, no man can destroy the sensitive faculty, without destroying life; but it is very possible to destroy its enjoyments; that is, it is possible to destroy those strong

excitements by which it prompts us to happiness. When these excitements are once subdued or extinguished, the sensations that remain, having lost that energy which "prompts, impels, inspires," can neither "devour its object," nor even "taste, the honey." In a word, all sensual enjoyment is at an end, and, therefore, the purposes for which the sensitive faculty was given, are completely frustrated. To argue, that it is wise to frustrate them,—that it is wise to deny ourselves the pleasures which they afford, is to argue, in other words, that man is wiser than the Architect of Nature, who gave us a faculty which, according to this theory, we are better without ; and which must, therefore, have been given to no purpose. In destroying the energy of the sensitive faculty, and, consequently, of its enjoyments, we confine the operations of the will, as I have observed above, to half the range appointed for them by nature ; for it cannot exercise itself in directing the operations of the sensitive faculty, such operations having no longer any existence. It is in vain to will, or seek after any sensual gratification, after the sensitive faculty is once completely subdued, and brought to a state of perfect self-denial, for the capability of enjoyment is then at an end, and the will, consequently, has no power of renewing it. The operations of the will being, therefore, confined to the perceptive or abstract faculty, half its power is destroyed. It is

evident, then, that he who has completely subdued the cravings and solicitations of the senses, is but half a man, and possesses only half the faculties which were originally granted him by nature. If it be asked, how are these cravings and excitements of the senses to be extinguished? I reply, by the two extremes of self-denial, and unbounded gratification. He who indulges in every pleasure which the senses afford him, will soon have no sense capable of enjoying pleasure; and he who denies himself all these pleasures, becomes equally incapable of enjoyment, for the natural strength and energy of the senses perish of themselves, when the enjoyments, after which they thirst, are continually denied to them. They become disgusted with their tyrant, and abandon him to that "stoic apathy," the virtue of which is "fixed as in a frost." It is in one or other of these extremes that men, as Bruyere says, "wish to love, but cannot succeed; they seek to be defeated, but they find they cannot, and, if the expression be allowable, they are constrained to remain free." The medium, then, between self-denial and unbounded gratification, is that golden medium where happiness has taken up her abode;—

That something still which prompts the eternal sigh,  
For which we bear to live, or dare to die;—  
Which still so near us, yet beyond us lies,  
O'erlooked, seen double, by the fool and wise.

POPE.

This is the very medium which Pope himself describes in the following beautiful lines.

Love, Hope, and Joy, fair Pleasure's smiling train ;  
Hate, Fear, and Grief, the family of Pain ;  
These mixed with art, and to due bounds confined,  
Make and maintain the balance of the mind ;—  
The lights and shades, whose well accorded strife,  
Gives all the strength and colour of our life,

If this reasoning be well founded, it is obvious, that in tracing the origin of any pleasure arising from the senses, we must not draw our observations from those who cultivate the pleasure of reason only, and who deny themselves every enjoyment arising from a sensitive source, because such men, properly speaking, are only half men, as they possess only half the faculties with which nature originally endowed them. From the habit of repelling their feelings and pleasurable sensations, they soon become insensible of their influence ; and, accordingly we find, that what raises an emotion of pleasure in others, have no charms for them. All the fine arts affect the mind through the medium of the senses, but who are worse judges of the fine arts than such philosophers and metaphysicians as give themselves up, exclusively, to mental and abstract contemplations ; and who, instead of yielding to any feeling of a pleasing character, are only solicitous to discover and analyze the nature of the impression by which they

find themselves affected. Locke was no judge of poetry, simply because he was insensible to its charms, because he was callous to those feelings which its beauties excite in every sensible mind,—every mind which, instead of resisting, yields, spontaneously, to the pleasing emotions which arise within it. Accordingly, he despised poetry and all its professors, except such of them as addressed the understanding alone, and presented but few of those images by which the senses are delighted. Of this, we have a sufficient proof in his panegyric on one of Blackmore's Epics. Longuerue was a writer of profound knowledge: he read, and probably admired, poetry in his youth; but from resigning himself afterwards to abstract studies, and resisting all the pleasing emotions of sense, he began, at length, to look on poetry with indifference. How insensible he was to its charms will appear from the following passage in his *Longuerana*. "There are two books in Homer which I prefer to *Homer himself*. The first is the *Antiquitates Homericae* of Feithius, where he has extracted every thing relative to the usages and customs of the Greeks; the other is *Homeri Gnomologia per duportum*, printed at Cambridge. In these two books is found every thing valuable in Homer, without being obliged to get through his childish stories! *contes à dormir de bout!*

If we were to trace the origin, not only of the

pleasures which are derived from public shews and spectacles, the fights of the ancient gladiators, bull feasts, &c., but even of poetry, painting, and all the fine arts, to observations drawn from the manner in which human nature operates in such metaphysical stoics as these, we should necessarily conclude, not only that they were mere delusions, but delusions, too, arising, not from the nature, but from the weakness of man. That such a conclusion would be naturally and logically drawn from such observations, is proved by the fact. The contempt which Locke, Longuerue, Selden, Le Clerc, and others entertained for poetry, if well founded, would render all the fine arts, and their productions, equally contemptible, because they are all founded on the same basis, namely, that of imparting pleasure through the medium of the senses.

These philosophers prized only what imparts pleasure through the faculty of perception, comparison, discussion, &c.; and, consequently, they, and a great portion of the ancient philosophers, held, that so far as man yielded to the senses, so far he fell below the dignity of his nature, became the sport of appearances in which he should place no confidence, and the dupe of impressions to which he should never yield. That the promulgators of such a doctrine could derive little pleasure from public representations of any description, requires no argument to prove, as their theory, if it be good

for any thing, proves, that the fine arts in general, as well as representations of every description, are founded not in the nature, but in the weakness of man. Their doctrine, however, confutes itself; for the heart could never feel a pleasing emotion through the medium of the senses, if it were not so constituted by nature. But it will be granted, no doubt, that the heart is so constituted, while it will still be denied, that we ought to yield to the appetite for pleasure. If we ought not, it naturally follows, that happier results must emanate from resisting than from yielding to sensible impressions. But will any person maintain this to be the fact, who considers, for a moment, that the bulk of mankind derive all their happiness from this forbidden source alone, and that no other source lies open to them from which it can proceed.

The pleasures acquired through the medium of pure intellect, and abstract contemplation, are placed only within the reach of a few, because nature has endowed few with those powers of mind, which enable us to contemplate things abstractedly from the senses, because, those who possess these powers must devote a great portion of their lives to arrive at this intellectual perfection,—because this portion of their lives must be spent, if not in misery, at least devoid of happiness, as happiness, according to this theory, can only emanate from an intellectual source, and, finally, because a still

greater portion, or, properly speaking, the great bulk of mankind, have not the means of acquiring this knowledge, and, consequently, must never hope to enjoy pure happiness, if happiness can proceed only from spurning all sensible impressions, and prizing that pleasure only which proceeds from contemplation and abstract perception.

We see, then, that the pleasures of sense are natural pleasures, and whatever is natural must be rational at the same time. The rationality of enjoying sensible pleasures arises from this, that by resisting them, we lead a life of misery, as they are the only source from which man can derive happiness in a state of nature. And if we were to enter more deeply into the question, it would be easy to prove, philosophically, what experience of itself abundantly teaches, that no man can be happy who denies himself the pleasures that emanate from this source. The senses are perpetually about us, presenting pleasure to us in a thousand shapes. Whether we gratify them or not, we cannot exist without them, for a moment; and every time we refuse to gratify them, we necessarily and unavoidably inflict punishment on ourselves; and even when we reduce them to a state of perfect subjection, or, at least, subject them so far that their voice is scarcely heard, their excitements scarcely felt, their desires scarcely known, the only happiness we can boast of is, that we are incapable of



happiness,—an empty boast, however it may be dignified by the pride of stoic indifference, or intellectual greatness. Let it not be thought, that I would depreciate the happiness arising from the cultivation of reason, when united with the pleasures of feeling and imagination; for the felicity arising from this union of the mental powers, is the most exquisite that nature can impart: but reason should be considered the guide, not the creator of our pleasures. Mentor was wiser than Telemachus, but Telemachus was the happier man. Even when he yielded to the headlong impetuosity of his passions, when he ingloriously resigned himself, as we are pleased to call it, to the strong infatuation of love, when Eucharis exercised a greater dominion over his mind, than either Jupiter or Minerva, Ulysses, Penelope, or Mentor, even then, Telemachus was a happier man than his wise preceptor and angel guardian. The impetuous propensities of his nature rendered him not only incapable of pain, but enabled him to convert pain into pleasure. All pleasures arise from the senses, or, more philosophically speaking, from the reciprocation of those external influences by which the senses are acted upon, and that susceptibility of feeling which responds to these influences. It is impossible to form a sublime conception, unless it be connected with some sensible image; and the closer the connexion, the more sublime the idea.

The impression made upon us by the sensible image, not only lifts up the mind to the same elevation with itself, but heightens and gives zest to the pleasures resulting from that act of the mind by which it was originally conceived.

Hence it is, that poets are the most, and metaphysicians the least, sublime of all writers, the creations and images of the former being all taken from the sensible, and those of the latter from the intellectual world. The metaphysician excels in separating, analyzing, and resolving the minuter shades and elements of things, while the poet excels in vastness and comprehension; in discovering resemblances, not differences; concords, not discords; sympathies, not antipathies. The language of the poet, is, therefore, the language of love, and consequently the language of enjoyment, while the language of the metaphysician is, in every respect, the very opposite, and consequently affords no pleasure, but what arises from the pride or satisfaction of knowing what is concealed from others. This however is, in many respects, a negative pleasure, and, as it arises from these two sources alone, it wants that infinite variety which poetry, the fine arts, and sensible gratifications of every description, are capable of affording.

The pleasures acquired through the medium of the senses are therefore the most exquisite, the most palpably felt, the most sensibly, if I may use

the term, enjoyed ; the most positive and real, so far, at least, as regards our perceptions of reality, the most sublime and diversified in their objects, embracing as they do all the creations of imagination ; for imagination can conceive nothing that does not bear the stamp of sensible existence ; in a word, as the pleasures of sense, are, properly speaking, the only pleasures we can be said to feel, pleasures of every description being only various modifications of sense, or feeling, we cannot be surprised, that man should be eagerly and powerfully attached to strong sensations. We find, accordingly, that with the exception of those who have brought the senses under a perfect subjection, to the principle of self-denial, or, in whom a life of abstract contemplation has weakened the energy and susceptibility of the senses, an effect which may also result from ill health, and other physical causes ; these, excepted, we find the rest of mankind strongly attached to the enjoyments arising from this prolific source. We find them running after objects, and delighting in spectacles, the very recollection of which, or even the mention of which, strikes more tender minds with the most painful feelings. Are we to suppose, that any person who retains the nature of man ; who has a particle of humanity in his breast, would wish, for a moment, to see his fellow creature torn by the most excruciating pain which human ingenuity can devise, to

follow him to the scaffold, and behold him writhing in the agonies of the most insufferable torments ? The idea is revolting to human nature ; but this very nature which revolts at barbarity, delights, notwithstanding, in witnessing the infliction of all these torments. We find all strong sensations which are not absolutely painful through their intensity, agreeable to youth ; and so great is their attachment to these sensations, that they will frequently endure pain rather than be deprived of the pleasure by which it is accompanied.

They have an eternal propensity to change the sensation of the moment for some other, whatever pain it may cost them, if this sensation has been felt for any length of time, because a continued sensation soon becomes no sensation at all. Accordingly, we find them running into every mischief, and placing themselves in situations which are actually painful, because the pleasure of the strong sensation is greater than the accompanying pain. The pleasure of strong sensations is so great a feast to them, that even a sense of imminent danger will not prevent them from enjoying it. They climb the steepest precipices, at the peril of their lives,—they traverse the deepest snows with greater luxury than they enjoy on beds of down ; they fly those softer scenes of insipid ease which tend not to put the soul and all its ener-

gies into action.—Restlessness, tumult, and agitation are almost the only pleasures which they prize. They have no delicacy in the selection of the objects or means by which their sensations are produced ; and care not what the sensation is, provided it be a strong one. The love of strong sensations is the universal law by which all their actions are determined. Hence they cannot walk the streets without running into puddles and mire, unless they are punished for it by their parents. In fact, the greatest trouble which parents have with their children is to keep them quiet, that is, to prevent them from indulging in strong sensations, or placing themselves in the situations by which these sensations are produced.

It is youth alone that present us with a true portrait of the natural man ; and that consequently, make us acquainted with the real and undisguised propensities of the human race, while these propensities act according to their own nature, and receive no check from the counteraction of reason. Their indulgence beyond a certain degree, is termed vice ; but it should be recollected, that vice is vice only in him who knows it to be so, and, happily, youth know little about it, till they are made acquainted with it by circumstances and the progress of reason. In youth, the empire of reason is unknown, and consequently

it gives us a better opportunity of becoming acquainted with the real and natural propensities of the heart. It is therefore properly described by a French poet,

*Cette agréable saison,  
Où le cœur, à son empire,  
Assujettit la raison.*

To say that these propensities are vicious, because they do not conform to the precepts of reason and religion, is saying nothing to the point ; because the question to be considered is, what are our real propensities, not what they are conformable to. These ardent propensities for strong sensations, which evince themselves in our earliest years, continue without intermission, while the physical powers retain all their vigour, and are more conspicuous from the age of twenty to thirty, than at any former, or subsequent period.

*Un jeune homme toujours bouillant dans ses caprices,  
Est prompt à recevoir l'impression des vices,  
Est vain dans ses discours, volage en ses desirs,  
Rétif à la censure, et fou dans les plaisirs.*

In fact, a young man, who enjoys good health and spirits, and without this enjoyment man is not himself, spurns every sensation that is not of a strong and powerful nature. He encounters difficulties which are above his strength, and places himself in the most dangerous and trying situations,

that he may enjoy the pleasure resulting from the strong sensations which they naturally produce ; and so attached is he to these sensations, that he becomes blind to the perils that surround him on every side. He believes himself capable of every thing, despises actual and impending dangers, always runs into extremes, because the greater the extreme, the more powerful the sensation. What species of reading is more pleasing to youth, than fairy tales, and marvellous adventures, thickly sown with wizzards, witches, magicians, enchanted castles, and whatever else can produce the most powerful sensation ? Even in the present improved state of society in Europe, newspapers are more generally read than any other productions of the press, not because they make us more learned, but because they contain whatever is most wonderful and surprising, whatever is best calculated to produce strong sensations.

The newspapers, accordingly, are more read in time of war, than when peace has released the world from the dangers and apprehensions which follow in its train. It is only in time of peace, that we betake ourselves to poetry, and the delights of science ; but the moment war has sounded her brazen trumpet, we dismiss the gentler sensibilities of the muse, and fly to the stronger feelings, produced by scenes of havoc and destruction. The stronger sensation always extinguishes the weaker,

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which could never happen, if the former did not produce the greater pleasure; for it is certain that we always prefer that which is the most pleasing and agreeable to us. The strong sensation produced in this country by the trial of the late Queen made some thousands neglect their business. It was the only subject of conversation in the higher, as well as the lower circles; and things, which, at other times, would be interesting, were then totally passed over, as things of no interest whatever. The stronger sensation, therefore, like the "master passion," swallows up the rest. Those influences which produce a keen and lively sensation of pleasure, are totally disregarded, when a strong sensation takes possession of us, or when we have an opportunity of placing ourselves in a situation which we know, antecedently, must produce, a strong sensation in us. Can it then be denied, that the stronger sensation is felt to be the stronger pleasure. If it should be said, that though a stronger, excites a more earnest attention, than a weaker sensation, yet this sensation is different from that feeling which we call pleasure, I would ask, what pleasure is, if not that which we like most, or which gratifies us most,—that sensation which we are most desirous of feeling, and which we should most regret, if we were denied the gratification which it impart? In a word, what is pleasure but that which gives us the highest satis-



faction? Now I would ask, what would have yielded higher satisfaction to the citizens of London, than to be present at the Queen's trial? Would not the theatre, the ball room, the masquerade, be equally deserted if this liberty were permitted? At least, would not the great majority of the lower circles, and it is only among them we are to seek for human nature, derive more satisfaction from being permitted to witness the trial, than they would from beholding her invested with all the insignia of royalty, had the trial never occurred? not that the people of England would delight in the misfortune, or peril of the Queen, or of any individual, but that all men like to enjoy the strong sensations excited by peril and misfortune, though they will not co-operate in producing them, though they feel more pleasure in preventing than in causing those catastrophes which they find such pleasure in beholding when brought about without any co-operation or instrumentality of their own. Granting, however, that something more attractive drew off a great majority of the people from the trial, it will still be found, that this something must produce a stronger sensation in those who were attracted by it, than the trial. A man in great distress, for instance, would find more pleasure in staying at home, if he were to receive a sovereign for so doing, whereas an affluent man would not be prevented by such an offer for a

moment. Whence, then, does this difference of conduct arise? Evidently from each of them loving to pursue that which excites the strongest sensation in himself. What can produce a stronger sensation in a famishing man, than the receipt of a sovereign, except the receipt of two, three, &c. He therefore feels little interest in the trial, not only because a stronger sensation gives him higher satisfaction at home, but because, independently of the motive which keeps him at home, the trial is incapable of producing that strong sensation in his mind which it would produce in others; for, as I have already observed, in treating of sympathy, he who is deeply afflicted himself can never sympathize in the woes of others.

The affluent man acts differently; but he is strictly governed by the same law, and prefers, like the former, the stronger sensation to the weaker. The acquisition of a sovereign cannot produce a strong sensation in him, or rather it produces no sensation at all. He will not, therefore, accept of it on the condition of denying himself the pleasure which he anticipates from the strong sensation about to be produced by the trial. The highest pleasure is, therefore, always produced by the strongest sensation, no matter by what means this sensation is excited. Strong sensations affect us differently, according to the difference of the causes by which they are elicited; but they all

agree, without exception, in producing a modification of feeling which is always pleasing to us, and therefore, pleasure must not be considered as one simple mode of being affected, for the modes of pleasure are infinitely diversified, every sensation being a pleasure which gives us satisfaction, and which we are unwilling not to feel. It is, therefore, erroneous to suppose, that strong sensations are agreeable or disagreeable according to the manner in which they affect us ; for let them affect us as they will, they are always pleasing, unless their intensity cause actual pain. Let imagination form to itself as great a diversity of circumstances or objects fitted to produce strong sensations as it can, and we shall find, that however endlessly different they may be from each other, they will be all pleasing without exception. If a man were to walk in the air down the middle of Oxford Street, without any visible support, it would, no doubt, produce a strong sensation ; but yet a sensation very different from that produced by the Queen's trial. Would it therefore be the less pleasing ? I am confident it would not, though the pleasure, in both instances, would be differently felt. The degree of pleasure, however, in each, would depend altogether on the degree of intensity with which it was felt ; so that however important the issue of the Queen's trial might be to the nation, yet, unless it produced a stronger sensation than that

produced by the aerial pedestrian, it would certainly not afford the same degree of pleasure. This would appear obvious enough, should the aerial spectacle take place, for all London would crowd to see it, and forget the interest produced by the trial. Let us suppose a case fitted to produce stronger sensations than either of these, and we shall find that the pleasure still increases with the sensation, till it reaches to actual pain. If it were demonstratively proved, from the operation of the laws of nature, and the calculations of astronomy, that the moon was to be seen on a certain night, and only in a certain province in France, quitting her usual course, and advancing towards the earth in a direct line, increasing in magnitude as she approached, enlarging her dusky spots into vast regions of land, and her lucid tracts into immense oceans, that she was to continue approaching till the spectators had a distinct view of her hills, mountains, vales, woods, rivers, plains; houses, and even inhabitants;—that having approached thus far without producing any sensible inconvenience to them, she was to continue stationary for a month, I ask, whether every individual in Europe who could afford the expenses, would not be seen in this part of France within that short period? Now, as it is obvious that nothing could bring so many millions of people to this part of France, but something that afforded them great pleasure; it is equal-

ly obvious, that the pleasure is always proportioned to the strength of the sensation, and, consequently, the greater the sensation, the greater the pleasure. It is idle, then, to attribute the pleasure resulting from Tragic Representations to sympathy, for there can be no sympathy with the moon, and yet the spectacle which I have spoken of would give greater pleasure than all the Tragic Representations that were ever exhibited; and that, evidently, because it would produce a stronger sensation. Had such a spectacle been presented to the eyes of Europe during the Queen's trial, the latter would scarcely be spoken of in England at the time, so slight would be the sensation it would produce; for however strong any sensation may be, it instantly perishes if a stronger be excited.

Whatever, then, affects the mind through the medium of the senses, produces a pleasure always proportionate to the degree in which we are affected, unless the cause by which the sensation is produced acts so powerfully on the organs by which it is received, as to produce actual pain. The sensation cannot be too strong for the mind, if the organs which convey it can endure the action of the exciting cause. Thus, if instead of the moon, the sun were seen descending from the heavens in all his meridian glory, increasing as he approached in heat and magnitude, and throwing a world of splendour and insufferable radiance around

him, it is obvious that so grand a spectacle would produce a much stronger sensation than could be experienced by the approach of the moon, and that the pleasure of beholding it would be proportionably greater, while our sensitive organs could endure the increasing intensity of light and heat ; but the moment this intensity became intolerable, the pleasure would instantly perish.

To what can we attribute the institution of public games and theatric representations among the ancient Greeks, if not to the love of strong sensations? It is this propensity that gave rise to their foot, horse, and chariot races, wrestling, leaping, the disk, pugilism, &c. The fame of the Olympic, Isthmian, Nemean, and Pythian games, shall never be forgotten, nor the immense number of spectators which crowded to see them. They may be said, in a manner, to have been witnessed by all Greece. So great was the rage for these dangerous exercises, that they were considered sacred, and consecrated to religion. They served to honour the remains of departed heroes in Greece and Rome; witness the funeral games on the death of Patroclus, in Homer, and those which were appointed by Æneas in honour of his father Anchises. In Rome public games were carried to an inconceivable pitch of grandeur and magnificence. They were placed under the immediate care of Roman kings, during the monarchy, and after its subver-

sion the consuls and chief magistrates took charge of them. To increase them in number, they dedicated them, not only to the celestial, but to the infernal deities; such were the games called *Taurilia*, *Compitalia*, and *Terentini ludi*. Every reader acquainted with Roman History knows how strongly the Romans were attached to these games. We meet with one of the most remarkable instances of this attachment in the Dictatorship of A. Posthumius, who, seeing the affairs of Rome in a most ruinous condition, made a solemn vow, that if the Roman arms should rescue the state from the perils to which it was exposed, he would institute magnificent games in honour of Castor and Pollux. The sensation produced by the expectation of witnessing these games, had such an effect on the Roman soldiery, that they became invincible in the field, and soon retrieved the fallen majesty of the senate, and the glory of the Roman arms. Posthumius fulfilled his promise, and the senate ordered these games to be celebrated yearly, during a period of eight days.

But it will be said, that these games were not much relished or frequented by the Roman philosophers. Grant it: are Tragic Representations, at the present day, much frequented by our own philosophers? Mr. Campbell says of poetry, that "the progress of literature serves only to diminish its pleasures," and the same may be said

of the pleasures of the stage. The cause of this effect is the same in both cases: the more we reason, the more apt we are to view every subject through the cold, analyzing medium of the understanding, and to divest it of those smiling hues in which feeling and imagination love to encircle all their objects: and the less we reason, the more apt we are to view every thing through the medium of the feelings alone. Those who seldom consult their feelings, as I have already observed, extinguish them by degrees, and have soon no feelings left to consult; so that the feelings of human nature must not be sought for in the abstract or metaphysical world, though a learned man may feel and act like the rest of mankind. Those whose studies are founded on the science of human nature, and who are consequently obliged to consult their own feelings, and the manner in which they are affected, when placed in particular situations, in order to become acquainted with the feelings of others,—as poets, painters, sculptors, connoisseurs, critics, and the lovers of the fine arts in general,—differ not in their feelings and pleasures from the rest of mankind; or, if they do not enjoy their objects with as strong and greedy an appetite, at least they enjoy them with a keener and livelier relish.

Du Bos admits that strong sensations are pleasing to us in a certain degree; but so far from considering them as productive of the highest pleasure,



he attributes the pleasure resulting from them, rather to the power they possess of removing the uneasiness which attends *ennui*, and want of occupation, than to any positive pleasure which they are fitted to impart. This sort of pleasure is, evidently, only that negative pleasure which arises from the removal of pain. It can have nothing positive in its nature, being produced by no sensible cause, and originating entirely from an act of the mind, which felicitates itself on its escape from the uneasiness which it had previously endured. Hume adopts this theory in part, and rejects it in part, adding to it whatever he thought necessary to render it perfect.

“ L’Abbe Du Bos,” he says, “ in his reflections on poetry and painting, asserts that nothing is, in general, so disagreeable to the mind as the languid listless state of indolence into which it falls, upon the removal of all passion and occupation. To get rid of this painful situation, it seeks every amusement and pursuit ; business, gaming, shews, executions, whatever will rouse the passions, and take its attention from itself. No matter what the passion is ; let it be disagreeable, melancholy, disordered, it is still better than that insipid languor which arises from perfect tranquillity and repose.”

This is the theory of Du Bos, as stated by Hume, and that which approaches nearest to the one which I have adopted in this work, on the source

of Tragic Pleasure. It approaches to it, however, more in appearance than in reality ; for Du Bos, so far from making strong sensations a source of pleasure, maintains that they are always attended with *inquiétude*, and produce lasting and acute pain. “ *L'inquiétude*,” he says, “ *que les affaires causent, ni les mouvemens qu'elles demandent, ne Sçauroient plaire aux hommes, PAR EUX MEMES. Mais les hommes craignent encore plus l'ennui qui suit l'inaction, et ils trouvent dans les mouvement des affaires, et dans l'ivresse des passions, une émotion qui les tient occupés.*” If we ask him, then, why are we pleased with strong sensations, he will not reply, because they give us unmingled pleasure, but because we prefer enduring the pain which they inflict, to the torment of that *ennui* which we experience in their absence. He says we know, antecedently, that strong passions are attended with painful consequences, *suites fâcheuses*, but that of two evils we choose the least, and prefer the pain to the *ennui* of inaction. The whole of the pleasure we derive from Tragic Representations is, therefore, a mere escape from pain. It is consequently, in every respect, a negative pleasure, or, rather, it is a positive pain, rendered pleasant by the reflection, that it is not altogether so painful as that which it enables us to escape ; or, to express it in the words of Hume, “ it is still better than

that insipid languor which arises from perfect tranquillity and repose.

If Du Bos be right, we go to a tragedy, not for the pleasure it imparts, but to avoid the pain arising from the listlessness and stupidity of remaining at home. We need not go far in search of arguments to prove this theory erroneous, and to shew, that strong sensations impart real and positive pleasure, and positive pleasure surely owes no part of its effect or intensity to the reflections which we make on the *ennui* and inquietude which it enables us to escape. We have only to consult our own feelings on the subject, and they will instantly inform us, that we go to see a tragedy, not to escape pain, but to enjoy real, actual, and positive pleasure. There are cases, it is true, where people go to the theatre, to banish the idea of some immediate grievance ; but these cases are few, and if those who are influenced by them never went there, it would be still, in appearance, as much frequented as ever. How many go to the theatre who could spend the evening happily at home? how many are undetermined, whether to go there or not, because they do not know which to prefer, the pleasures which they may enjoy at home, or those which they anticipate by going to the theatre? It is not, therefore, to avoid *ennui* or positive pain that we go in search of the enjoy-

ments which the theatre affords, but to enjoy a pleasure which is really and sensibly felt.

Besides, it is a mistake to suppose, that tranquillity and repose are, in themselves, absolutely painful. Some of the finest poems in every language are written on the pleasures of retirement, and the delights of solitude. Some have gone so far as to say, that it is only in solitude we can enjoy true pleasure and felicity; but allowing this picture of solitude to be too highly coloured, yet it affords evidence enough that tranquillity and repose are not absolutely painful. Who would not fall in love with retirement, after perusing the following passage in Goldsmith's "Deserted Village."

O blest retirement, friend to life's decline,  
Retreats from care, that never must be mine,  
How blest is he, who crowns, in shades like these,  
A youth of labour with an age of ease;  
Who quits a world when strong temptations try,  
And since 'tis hard to combat, learns to fly.  
For him no wretches, born to work and weep,  
Explore the mine, or tempt the dangerous deep;  
No surly porter stands in guilty state,  
To spurn imploring famine from the gate;  
But on he moves to meet his latter end,  
Angel's around, befriending virtue's friend;  
Sinks to the grave with unperceived decay,  
While resignation gently slopes the way;  
And, all his prospects brightening to the last,  
His heaven commences ere the world be past.

Hume, however, agrees in the main with this theory of Du Bos, and thinks, with him, that the pleasure resulting from strong sensations, is a mere "relief to that apprehension under which men commonly labour, when left entirely to their own thoughts and meditations." The real objections to this theory he passes over, and perceives only one reason for refusing to give it his unqualified assent. "There is, however," he says, "a difficulty in applying to the present subject, in its full extent, this solution, however ingenious and satisfactory it may appear. It is certain, that the same object of distress, which pleases in a tragedy, were it really set before us, would give the most unfeigned uneasiness, though it be then the most effectual cure to languor and indolence." This objection seems not to be so well founded as Hume imagines, nor is it so certain, that the same object of distress which pleases in a tragedy would give the most unfeigned uneasiness, were it really set before us; for if this be the fact, why do we see people running in crowds to witness executions, fights, shipwrecks, &c.? These are real objects of distress, and yet, so great is our delight in witnessing them, that, as Burke observes, we should quit the deepest and best performed tragedy to behold the execution of a state criminal. In all countries, and in all ages, this propensity for witnessing scenes of real distress has uniformly prevailed. It is many ages since Lucretius flou-

rished, and it was then as prevalent as at the present moment. He describes the pleasure resulting from witnessing a shipwreck, an engagement, &c., in the following lines.

Suave mari magno, turbantibus æquora ventis  
 E terra alterius magnum spectare laborem :  
 Suave etiam belli certamina magna tueri  
 Per campos instructa tui sine parte pericli.

Du Bos himself justly observes, that the more dangerous are the evolutions of a rope dancer, and the more he exposes his life, the more delight he affords us. So that, at the time of Du Bos, and of Lucretius, as well as at present, we find that the real perils to which others are exposed, afford a pleasure of the highest and deepest character. It is not, therefore, the mere fictitious distress we see represented on the stage that alone pleases us, for the real, actual distress to which our fellow creatures are exposed, as it produces a stronger sensation, produces also, except in the case already mentioned, a pleasure incomparably greater than any gratification we can derive from its imitation on the stage. Hume's objection to Du Bos's theory is, consequently, frivolous, and founded on the assumption of a fact, which is absolutely erroneous, and disproved by the experience of mankind. Let us now see how he attempts to improve it by the assistance of Fontenelle.

“Monsieur Fontenelle,” he says, seems to have been sensible of this difficulty, (the foregoing objection to Du Bos’s theory) and, accordingly, attempts another solution of the phenomenon, at least, makes some addition to the theory above mentioned. “Pleasure and pain,” says he, “which are two sentiments so different in themselves, differ not so much in their cause. From the instance of tickling, it appears, that the movement of pleasure pushed a little too far, becomes pain, and that the movement of pain, a little moderate, becomes pleasure. Hence it proceeds, that there is such a thing as a sorrow soft and agreeable : it is a pain weakened and diminished. The heart likes, naturally, to be moved and affected. Melancholy objects suit it, and even disastrous and sorrowful, provided they are softened by some circumstance. It is certain, that on the theatre, the representation has always the effect of reality, yet it has not, altogether, that effect. However we may be hurried away by the spectacle, whatever dominion the senses and imagination may usurp over the reason, there still lurks at the bottom an idea of falsehood, in the whole of what we see. This idea, though weak and disguised, suffices to diminish the pain which we suffer from the misfortunes of those whom we love, and to reduce that affliction to such a pitch, as converts it into pleasure. We weep for the misfortunes of a hero to whom we are attached. In

the same instant, we comfort ourselves by reflecting, that it is nothing but a fiction, and it is precisely that mixture of agreeable sorrow and tears that delight us. But, as that affliction which is caused by exterior and sensible objects, is stronger than the consolation which arises from an internal reflection, they are the effects and symptoms of sorrow, that ought to predominate in the composition." "This solution," says Hume, "seems just and convincing;" but how it should appear either one or the other to this acute philosopher, seems to me very extraordinary.

The objection he makes to the former theory of Du Bos, is, "that the same object of distress which pleases in tragedy, were it really set before us, would give the most unfeigned uneasiness;" and yet, Fontenelle, whose theory seems to him "*just and convincing*," affirms the direct contrary, and asserts, "that the representation has always the effect of the reality, though it has not altogether that effect." Can any thing shew the short-sightedness of philosophy, or rather, of those whom we term philosophers, than that which is exhibited to us in the present instance? Hume says, that real distress is painful to us, though the imitation is pleasing. Fontenelle asserts, that the imitation produces the same effect with the reality, which, according to Hume, must necessarily be painful. If Fontenelle, then, be right, Hume must be wrong;



and yet Fontenelle's theory seems "*just and convincing*" to Hume; which is only saying, in other words, that he is convinced Fontenelle is right, and that he himself is wrong. But how can Fontenelle be right, when he says "the heart likes naturally to be moved and affected. Melancholy objects suit it, and even disastrous and sorrowful, provided they are softened by some circumstance?" In applying this to Tragic Pleasure, the qualifying circumstance which softens the sorrowful objects, is "a certain idea of falsehood in the whole of what we see." If this be true, melancholy objects, or objects of distress, do not please us, except when we know they are so only in appearance. We can, therefore, take no pleasure in witnessing shipwrecks, engagements, the fights of gladiators, &c. where we are ourselves free from all danger, because, in these cases, the distress is real, without any softening circumstance, or idea of falsehood in the whole of what we see. Yet, as the experience of mankind convinces us, that we do find pleasure in these real spectacles, how frivolous is it to attribute the pleasure to "a certain idea of falsehood." Besides, if it be this idea of falsehood that imparts the pleasure, it is obvious, that the representation, instead of having, according to Fontenelle himself, "the effect of reality," has an effect contrary to it; for, if we be pleased, because we know the distress is not real, we should evidently feel no pleasure if

we knew it to be real, so that the representation and the reality must, consequently, have an opposite effect. The fact, however, is, that both the reality and the representation are pleasing to us, and that the latter is pleasing only because it produces an effect similar to that of its prototype.

After commenting on the theories of Du Bos and Fontenelle, Hume proceeds to make such additions to them as would render the theory of Tragic Pleasure perfect; for though he admits, that Fontenelle's "conclusion seems just and convincing," yet he thinks, "it wants still some new addition in order to make it answer fully the phenomenon" of Tragic Pleasure. "All the passions," he says, "excited by eloquence are agreeable in the highest degree, as well as those which are moved by painting, and the theatre. The epilogues of Cicero are, on this account, chiefly the delight of every reader of taste; and it is difficult to read some of them without the deepest sympathy and sorrow." His merit, as an orator, no doubt, depends much on his success in this particular. When he had raised tears in his judges, and all his audience, they were then the most highly delighted, and expressed the greatest satisfaction with the pleader. The pathetic description of the butchery made by Verres of the Sicilian captains, is a masterpiece of this kind. But I believe none will affirm that, the

being present at a melancholy scene of that nature would afford any entertainment. Neither is the sorrow here softened by fiction : for the audience were convinced of the reality of every circumstance. What is it then which, in this case, raises a pleasure from the bosom of uneasiness, so to speak ; and a pleasure which still retains all the features and outward symptoms of distress and sorrow ? I answer, this extraordinary effect proceeds from that very eloquence with which the melancholy scene is represented. The genius required to paint objects in a lively manner, the art employed in collecting all the pathetic circumstances, the judgment displayed in disposing them ; the exercise, I say, of these noble talents, together with the force of expression and beauty of oratorical numbers, diffuse the highest satisfaction on the audience, and excite the most delightful movements. By this means the uneasiness of the melancholy passions is not only overpowered and effaced by something stronger of an opposite kind, but the whole impulse of those passions is converted into pleasure, and swells the delight which the eloquence raises in us. The same force of oratory employed on an uninteresting subject, would not please half so much, or rather would appear altogether ridiculous ; and the mind being left in absolute calmness and indifference, would relish none of those beauties of imagination or expres-

sion, which, if joined to passion, give it such exquisite entertainment. The impulse or vehemence arising from sorrow, compassion, indignation, receives a new direction from the sentiments of beauty. The latter being the predominant motion, seizes the whole mind, and converts the former into themselves, at least, tinctures them so strongly as totally to alter their nature. And the soul being, at the same time, roused by passion and charmed by eloquence, feels, on the whole, a strong movement which is altogether delightful.

“ The same principle takes place in tragedy ; with this addition, that tragedy is an imitation ; and imitation is always of itself agreeable. This circumstance serves still further to smooth the motions of passion, and convert the whole feeling into one uniform and strong enjoyment. Objects of the greatest terror and distress please in painting ; and please more than the most beautiful objects that appear calm and indifferent. The affection rousing the mind, excites a large stock of spirit and vehemence ; which is all transformed into pleasure by the force of the prevailing movement. It is thus the fiction of tragedy softens the passion by an infusion of a new feeling ; not merely by weakening or diminishing the sorrow. You may, by degrees, weaken a real sorrow, till it totally disappears ; yet in none of its gradations will it ever give pleasure, except, perhaps, by accident, to a man

sunk under lethargic indolence, whom it rouses from that languid state."

To disprove Hume's theory it is sufficient to shew that it contradicts itself. I admit his theory may be right, though supported by erroneous arguments, but, in this case, we must receive it, not on his authority, but on the authority of some better arguments by which we can support it ourselves. The theory, however, is not only erroneous in itself, but supported by erroneous arguments. In commenting on Du Bos, he says, that the distress which pleases in a tragedy would give us real pain if it were actually set before us ; and here he introduces Cicero describing real sufferings. The destruction of the Sicilian captains by Verres, was no fiction, and so Hume himself acknowledges ; " neither," he says, " is the sorrow here softened by fiction, for the audience were convinced of the reality of every circumstance." Would not the reader then suppose, that Hume introduced this description of real suffering, to shew that it produces real pain, as he had already observed, that the distress which pleases in fiction gives pain in reality. And yet he tells us now, that this picture of real distress gave high delight to the judges and the audience. " When he had raised tears in his judges and all his audience, they were then the *most highly delighted*. And yet this delight was caused by a picture of real, not imaginary distress." He still continues to contradict

himself as he proceeds. "This extraordinary effect," he says, "proceeds from that very eloquence with which the melancholy scene is represented." He continues, as the reader may perceive in the above extract, to shew, that it is the beauty of the language, and not the tears occasioned by the distresses and sufferings which are described by Cicero, that produces the pleasure, and that the melancholy passions are overpowered and effaced by these beauties and converted into pleasure. Here we may truly say,

*Aliquando bonus dormitat Homerus ;*

for surely nothing can be more evident, than that the beauty of the language, so far from overpowering the melancholy feelings occasioned by the butchering of the Sicilian captains, is the very cause of raising this feeling to its utmost height. It is by raising this feeling, and not by overpowering it, that the judges and audience were melted to tears. The truth of what I here assert can easily be proved by displaying this eloquence on some indifferent subject. If the sensation produced by eloquence, independent of the subject, be more powerful than that occasioned by melancholy emotions, and converts these emotions into pleasure, it follows, that whatever the subject be, however trifling or uninteresting, it will enable the orator to excite deeper feelings than can ever be

produced by tragic distress. I believe no person will admit this to be the case ; and Hume himself admits, that, “ the same force of oratory employed on an uninteresting subject would appear altogether ridiculous ;” and so it would ; for that eloquence which leaves its subject behind it, or to the splendour of which its subject is not equal, is a mere *brutum fulmen*. It is not true, then, as Hume says, that the beauty of the language exciting “ the predominant motions, seize the whole mind, and convert the former—the melancholy emotions—into themselves, at least tincture them so strongly as totally to alter their nature.” The fact is, that the emotions produced by the sufferings of the Sicilians, so far from being altered by the language of Cicero, are only wrought up to the highest pitch ; and instead of being the weaker, are evidently the predominant passion. The judges and the audience are so powerfully swayed by their sympathies, that they comparatively forget the beauty of the eloquence by which they are moved. It is so in reading the Iliad, we forget Homer, and are affected only by the imposing scenes, daring actions, and pathetic situations which he has placed before us.

The tragic and the epic muse agree then in this capital circumstance, that the pleasures originating from them both, arise from the powerful emotions which they produce ; for it is a mistake, to sup-

pose that the pleasure which we feel in the perusal of a tragedy or an epic poem, arises from the genius, ability, and strict adherence to rule with which it is executed. In vain does the tragic writer observe all the restrictions which criticism imposes on him ; in vain does he observe unity in the design, connexion in the scenes, a regular though interrupted progress in the action ; proper motives for appearing on, and disappearing from the stage ; and the most exquisite *callida junctura* throughout all its parts :—all this he may do, and more than all this ; but if he want the art of inventing interesting characters, and pathetic situations, such as excite strong sensations, emotions, or passions, all his felicity of expression, happiness of description, and strict adherence to rule, produce no effect upon us. We look on, like cold spectators, and depart from the theatre less pleased than we entered it. On the contrary, the Tragic writer, who has the secret of inventing tender, affecting, and pathetic situations, or, what is the same, the art of exciting strong emotions, even at the expense of reason, will be always sure of pleasing. The reason is, that the most ignorant man cannot be deceived in what is pathetic : it excites the same feelings in him that it does in the most practised critic ; but, with regard to the violations of dramatic rule, in the conduct of the work, he is little acquainted, and, even if he were, the obser-



vation of them could only afford him a negative pleasure, by enabling him to escape the pain of seeing them violated. What pleasure is imparted by observing the unities of time and place, for we should never have reflected whether they were observed or not, had we never seen them violated. I know, the greatest dramatic writer is he who moves the heart without offending the understanding, or violating established precepts ; but then it must be recollected, that rules and precepts are the mere links by which we connect things together. These links are themselves concealed from us, except where they are clumsily contrived, for the more skilfully they are fabricated, the more difficult it is to discover them ; or, rather, the less apt we are to direct our attention to them. It is not, then, the links that connect, but the things connected, that affect us, as these links are kept wholly out of sight ; and, consequently, the situation which is not interesting in itself, will affect us but little, however, artfully it may be connected with another. If it be artfully connected, so much the better : it proves the writer a better artist ; but if he make use of inferior materials, that is, if his characters be not interesting, and placed in deep and affecting situations, all the art which human genius can exert in connecting these situations, can never succeed in exciting our sympathies. If it be asked, whether the generality of the audience

be proper judges of what is truly affecting, I reply, the most ignorant of them are. Sympathy cannot be taught: if nature denied it, education could never have imparted it. It is not the offspring of reason or science; for a simple feeling cannot be analyzed, nor its mode of action explained. Though we agree in calling that feeling, which is produced by objects of distress, sympathy, we cannot tell whether any two of us feel it alike. If one man be more moved than another, how is he to explain the exact degree of emotion which he feels; and without such an explanation, he cannot tell whether he feel the emotion differently, or what the degree of difference is. The most ignorant of us have therefore, as ample means of judging of the pathetic, as the most learned, for neither acquires his knowledge of it from instruction or science. Our ideas, and the comparisons which we institute between them, are the source of our knowledge, and, consequently, may be communicated and corrected by instruction; but our feelings are the sources of our pleasures and of our pains, and are incapable of being taught. We cannot learn to feel pain, unless we are acted upon by a cause sufficient to produce it; nor can we learn to avoid feeling pain when such a cause acts upon us. The Tragic writer has, therefore, no cause to fear, when he presents the audience with a tender or pathetic scene, that they will not be able to perceive it, for

if they do not *perceive*, at least they will *feel* it, and if they do not feel, he is mistaken in supposing it pathetic; the most enlightened part of the audience will think it frigid and uninteresting, as well as the most ignorant.

It is not, therefore, the art, or perfection of method observed in the conduct of tragedy, that excites those strong sensations and emotions which produce the pleasure arising from Tragic Representations. We are far from being so much interested in seeing every thing as it ought to be, as we are in seeing many things as they ought not to be. Where every thing is right, nothing surprises, and, therefore, a perfect character excites no interest in a tragedy. He only does what we expect him to do, and hence he does nothing to excite strong emotions. Neither are we pleased to see every thing wrong, for when a character is so consummately wicked as to disregard every moral precept, and never act in obedience to the laws of his own nature, (I mean human nature) we are disgusted: we are surprised at no act of his, because we know, antecedently, that he is capable of the worst of crimes. He produces, therefore, no strong sensations, and, consequently, no interest, and where there is no interest there is no pleasure. This is evidently the reason why critics have laid it down as a law, that the character best fitted for tragedy is an imperfect character, he who is

neither perfectly moral, nor irreclaimably wicked. No critic, however, has ever assigned a reason why the imperfect character is best adapted for tragedy; but the theory which I have endeavoured to establish on the subject of Tragic Pleasure, easily explains the cause. No character can excite strong sensations that is not more or less imperfect, or that acts just as he ought to act, for, in doing so, he does nothing to surprize us, or to excite those sensations, without which it is idle to hope, that the most laboured tragedy shall ever be productive of pleasure.

Hume, then, is evidently in error, when he attributes the effect to "the genius required to paint objects in a lively manner, together with the force of expression and beauty of oratorical numbers." Without genius, it is true, no writer can produce an interesting tragedy; but a writer of inferior genius, who brings together a number of pathetic circumstances and situations, shall impart more pleasure, even though he should violate some of the principal laws of dramatic criticism, than he who is rigidly observant of them, if he has invented only circumstances and situations of a cold and frigid nature. I would be far from insinuating, that the dramatic writer who invents interesting and pathetic scenes, is at liberty to indulge in all the licentiousness which an exuberant imagination can suggest, but however licentious he

may be, he will impart more pleasure, simply because he excites stronger sensations than he who, without this genius, is most observant of rule and dramatic precept.

The theory of Tragic Pleasure which I have now examined, is obviously a compound, made up of three theories. Du Bos, Fontenelle, and Hume, have each contributed their portion; but the original idea seems to have been taken from Montaigne. The soul, he says, must have always some object to employ it, and when it has not a legitimate one, it creates a false one for itself. He compares the soul to the wind, whose strength is increased by resistance, and broken where no object stands opposed to its violence.

*Ventus, ut amittat vires nisi robore densæ  
Occurrant sylvæ spatio diffusus inani.*

Hence, he says, to give a view a proper effect, it must be bounded, and not suffered to lose itself in the uncertain distance, for the soul must have something fixed to act upon, or it will employ itself with imaginary objects, rather than remain quiet. This propensity of the soul, he illustrates by noticing a similar law operating on the irrational brute. “Ainsi emporte les betes leur rage a s’attaquer a la pierre, et au fer qui les a blessées, et a se venger a belles dents sur soymesme du mal qu’elles sentent.

Pannonis haud aliter post ictum sævior ursa  
 Cui jaculum parvâ Libys amentavit habena,  
 Se rotat in vulnus, telumque irata receptum  
 Impetit et secum fugientem circuit hastam.

Xerxes fouetta la mer et escrivit un cartel de defie au Mont Athos."

These observations of Montaigne appear to me to have been the origin of Du Bos's theory of Tragic Pleasure, though Montaigne himself never thought of applying them to pleasures arising from tragic sources. That Du Bos had his eye upon them, however, can hardly be doubted, when he wrote the following passage. "L'ame a ses besoins comme le corps ; et l'un des grands besoins de l'homme, est celui d'avoir l'esprit occupé. L'ennui qui suit bientôt l'inaction de l'ame est un mal si douloureux pour l'homme qu'il entreprend souvent les travaux les plus pénibles afin de s'épargner la peine d'en être tourmenté."

It is certain, that the mind cannot be happy in a state of inaction, though it is possible that it may be free from all sensible pain. Some men will sit hours alone, without evincing the least disposition to enter into conversation, or mingle in the amusements of which they are spectators, which they would never do if this inaction was attended with any sensible pain. That it is not attended with pleasure I am willing to allow, unless the mind be exercised in mental speculation ; but still it

proves that inaction is not always a torment. It matters little, however, whether it be so or not, so far as regards Tragic Pleasure, for if the necessity of employing the mind account for this pleasure, it follows, that every thing that employs the mind is necessarily pleasing, for, if not, tragedy may be among those things which employ the mind, and still are not pleasing, and, therefore, we must have recourse to something beyond the mere necessity of employing the mind to account for this pleasure. It is, indeed, certain, that the mind is never happier than when employed in any thing agreeable to it; but it is equally certain, that it is never more unhappy than when employed in what is disagreeable. It is not, therefore, the mere act of employing the mind that gives pleasure, but the nature of the thing in which it is employed; and, consequently, it is idle to attribute the pleasure to the mere act of being employed, instead of attributing it to the nature of the employment.

Mr. Hazlitt, following Du Bos, says, that "the pleasure derived from tragic poetry has its source and ground-work in the common love of strong excitement." "We are as fond," he says, "of indulging our violent passions, as of reading a description of those of others. We are as prone to make a torment of our fears, as to luxuriate in our hopes of good. If it be asked why we do so, the best answer is, because we cannot help it. The

sense of power is as strong a principle in the mind as the love of pleasure. The objects of terror and pity exercise the same controul over it as those of love or beauty. It is as natural to hate as to love, to despise as to admire, to express our hatred or contempt, as our love or admiration." To this theory there are two obvious objections: the first is, that it is far from being true in the unqualified manner in which it is put by Mr. Hazlitt; the second, that all the reasons by which he seeks to confirm it are erroneous. It is not true that *all* strong excitements are pleasing, because, above a certain degree of intensity they are insufferably painful. "It by no means holds," says Mr. Campbell, in his Essay on this subject, "that the stronger the emotion is, so much the fitter for this purpose. On the contrary, if you exceed but ever so little a certain measure, instead of that sympathetic, delightful sorrow which makes affliction itself wear a lovely aspect, and engages the mind, not only to hug it with tenderness, but with transport, you only excite horror and aversion." This opinion of Mr. Campbell is easily proved by experiment. The instance adduced by Fontenelle proves it sufficiently. Tickling is pleasing, in a slight degree: increase this pleasure, by increasing the action, and it becomes painful. According to Mr. Hazlitt, however, this increased excitement ought to give more pleasure than a slight one; for if pleasure depend



on the strength of the excitement, the stronger it is the greater the pleasure. This, however, is not the fact. Strong excitement is pleasing only in a certain degree, and above this degree is always painful. There are two other cases in which strong excitements fail of imparting pleasure in any degree, the one is where the excitement is too long continued, the other where we are acted upon as individuals, placed in particular situations, and not as men in general, as will be shewn hereafter. Mr. Hazlitt's theory, therefore, will not hold good in a thousand instances, and the reason that he assigns for this theory, proves that he has taken it from Du Bos and Fontenelle, for, if he had discovered it himself by reflection and observation, he would never have advanced such futile and contradictory reasons in support of it. "It is as natural," he says, "to hate as to love, to despise as to admire, &c." But what reason does he assign for hatred, and all the other disagreeable passions, being as pleasing to us as the agreeable ones? Why, truly, "because we cannot help it." Now, if we hate because we cannot help it, it is evident that we find no pleasure in hatred, for we find no pleasure in any thing that is forced upon us, and that we cannot help. The passion that gives us real pleasure, we cherish and indulge, not because we cannot help it, not because it forces itself upon us, but because we do not choose to

help it, because we should not repel it even if we could. To say that the disagreeable passions are as "natural" to us as the agreeable ones, is saying nothing to the point, for though they are, unquestionably, as natural to those who yield to them, it by no means follows, that they are as pleasing, for a thing may be natural, and still extremely disagreeable. It is natural for a man to feel a disagreeable taste, when he drinks wormwood, though it is by no means natural that he should be pleased with it. If it should be replied, that the benefit he expects to derive from it converts this pain into pleasure, instances may be quoted without number, where such a conversion can never take place. It is natural that he whose arm is cut off by a sword should feel extreme pain, but it cannot, by any torture of argument, be shewn, that this pain is a pleasure. If, then, the reason by which Mr. Hazlitt supports his theory have any truth in it, it follows very evidently, that a merchant who is ruined at sea must derive great pleasure from the circumstance; for, as it is natural (so far as we know nature from experience) that the circumstance should give him pain, and, as whatever is natural, according to Mr. Hazlitt, is pleasing, the merchant's natural pain must evidently be a pleasure to him, so that pleasure and pain, according to Mr. Hazlitt's logic, are both the same. Indeed, he shews very clearly himself, that the pleasure ari-

sing from Tragic sources did not appear to him to be a pleasure at all, though he calls it a pleasure, and endeavours to account for it. "The sense of power," he says, "is as strong a principle in the mind, as the love of pleasure." From this it is clear, that the sense of power is different from the love of pleasure; for, if they were the same, he could institute no comparison between the degrees of energy with which they act upon the mind. If, then, the sense of power be not a pleasure, and that it is to gratify this sense we indulge in the "violent passions," how can it be said that these passions afford us any pleasure? Nothing, at the same time, appears more unintelligible to me, than what Mr. Hazlitt means by this sense of power, as he says, in the preceding sentence, that our reason for "indulging our violent passions," is, "*because we cannot help it.*" If we cannot help it, then, what becomes of this "sense of power." To me it has no meaning, unless Mr. Hazlitt meant *want* of power, by the expression "sense of power." If Mr. Hazlitt's theory, then, were true, the reasons by which he supports it could only serve to make it appear erroneous in the eyes of every man, who could not perceive its truth abstracted from the arguments on which it rests. It is certain, however, that no process of reasoning can prove all strong excitements and sensations pleasing in any of the three cases which I have mentioned, though

it is equally certain, that they are so in all other instances. The more we enter into human nature, and examine the laws by which it is governed, the more we must feel convinced, that the soul delights in all strong, ardent, and impetuous feelings and emotions, when they do not act above a certain degree, continue too long, or affect us, not as men in general, but as individuals, either of peculiar tempers, or placed in situations that influence our natural temper. This attachment to strong feelings does not, however, arise from our incapacity of resisting them, as Mr. Hazlitt asserts, but from our unwillingness to resist them, from our actual, voluntary attachment to them, and the actual pleasure they communicate at the moment. When we continue for any length of time in one state of feeling, the soul becomes, in a manner, unconscious of its existence, and continues so until it is roused by some circumstance, object, or event, and a new feeling excited within it. The moment this new sensation is felt, it finds itself placed in a new world; it feels itself different from what it ever felt itself before, for as it has no consciousness of its existence but what it derives from its sensations and perceptions, that is, from the impressions made upon it from without, each new sensation appears to it a new mode of existence, and, were it not for the faculty of memory, it could form no

conception of any other mode than that which it immediately feels.

Even with this faculty life consists in the present moment, or rather in the feelings or sensations of the moment ; but the reminiscent power enables us to revive past feelings, and to become again, in a manner, what we were before. We have no idea of soul, or spirit, or animated existence, considered separately from the structure of parts which it animates, but what we acquire from our sensations or consciousness of it ; for our ideas or perceptions are confined to the properties, relations, and differences of things, and take no cognizance of their essence, or the mode in which life is felt. The soul, or vital principle, it is true, consists not in sensation, perception, or will, but in that inconceivable something which feels, perceives, and exercises volition. The power which feels, however, or, in other words, the soul, would have no consciousness of its existence if no impressions were made upon it from without ; and when it is weary of these impressions and becomes incapable of feeling them, all consciousness of existence ceases. Hence it is that we have no consciousness of existence while we sleep, though the vital principle continues. If, then, our consciousness of life consists in our sensations of it, or rather, if our sensations be new modes of consciousness, it is obvious that each new sensation

is a new sort of existence; for though the power or principle that feels is always the same, yet every new sensation makes it appear different to us, because we have no idea or feeling of it but what arises from our sensations. From our feelings or sensations, then, we derive our consciousness that something within us exists. This something we call soul or spirit, but what it is we can neither describe nor conceive: we know it only by our feelings, and, therefore, so far as regards our knowledge of it, it appears to be a sensation eternally shifting the mode of its existence; but in whatever mode we examine it, we still find it to be a sensation of one kind or other, though the moment we come to abstract, we know that the sensation is different from the thing by which the sensation is felt; sensation being only a mode or property of something else. The soul or vital principle appears, therefore, to us at every moment a sensation, though the sensation of one moment differs from that of another. The same principle that attaches us to life consequently attaches us to sensations, and the more powerfully any sensation is felt, the more conscious are we of the vital principle within us. Hence it is that we love strong sensations, if not in the same proportion that we love life itself, at least in a degree always proportioned to it; for he who once becomes tired of his existence, suffers no new sensation to approach him; and, therefore, looks with indiffer-

ence on every thing calculated to produce it. It is only while we are in love with life that we are in love with strong sensations ; and it is only while we feel strongly that we can be properly said to live. Every weaker feeling gives a weaker consciousness of existence, so that some men can scarcely be said to live at all. Here then we have the origin of the pleasures resulting not only from Tragic Representations, but from every species of public exhibition, as the fights of gladiators among the Greeks and Romans, pantomimes, bull-feasts, &c. They all awaken strong sensations, emotions, or passions in the soul, and, consequently, a stronger consciousness of existence. The degree in which the sensation is felt always determines the degree of pleasure which it imparts, and the pleasure always increases with the degree till it reaches to absolute pain. Where it becomes painful depends on our susceptibility of impressions. " Men differ in this," says Helvetius, " that the degree of emotion which one regards as an excess of pleasure, is sometimes, in another, the beginning of pain. The eye of my friend may be pained by an excess of light that gives me pleasure." When a strong sensation becomes painful we wish to get rid of it, if the pain be intolerable ; but if not, even the accompanying pain cannot induce us to resign it. A strong sensation puts the soul in motion, and if we could conceive an idea of motion ab-

stracted from substance, if we could conceive it a thing and not a mode, we should have good reason for believing motion to be the soul itself. "If we always give the name of cause and effect to the concomitance of two parts," says Hume, "and that wherever there are bodies there is motion, we ought then to regard motion as the universal soul of matter, and the divinity that alone penetrates its substance." Motion, however, is not the divinity unless the divinity be an attribute; but it is at all times pleasing to the soul, unless it be moved in such a degree as tends to force it altogether from its material habitation. A slight titillation produces a pleasing sensation, because it puts the soul in motion, and as the sensation increases the pleasure increases also; but when it arrives to a certain height, it overpowers the soul, and, consequently, becomes painful. All sensations, then, that rouse the soul are pleasing up to the degree that renders them painful; so that, if it should be said the soul is not a lover of strong sensations, because it dislikes all sensations above this degree, I reply, that it would still continue to like them if its strength of endurance were equal to the increased power of the sensation; for as "the eye of my friend may be pained by the excess of light that gives me pleasure," it is evident that if my organ of vision were as weak as my friend's, it would give me pain also; and, therefore, it follows, that if his



organs were as strong as mine, it would give him the same pleasure which it affords me. Reasoning from the same analogy, were both our organs stronger, they would find greater pleasure in still greater light; so that the highest degree of light would be, of all others, the most pleasing to the soul, if the eye could endure it. It does not follow, however, that because we cannot endure it, we do not love it. The fly cannot endure the flame of the candle, but still it loves this flame; it hovers around it, approaches it frequently, at the peril of its life, seems conscious of the danger of approaching it nearer, cannot overcome, however, the instinct that prompts it to a nearer approach, and in obedience to the fatal impulse, perishes in the flame. By strong sensations, however, it must be recollected that I do not mean strong, disagreeable tastes or organical sensations of any kind, which do not tend to put the soul into action, and affect it like passion, the physical symptoms and signs of which are, in general, an irregular movement of the blood and animal spirits. So strong is our attachment to powerful sensations that we relish them, even when they are painful to a certain degree. Young people cannot endure to chew tobacco, but even in youth few are disgusted with the smoke of a tobacco pipe, because it puts the animal spirits in motion. By degrees they love a greater and a denser portion of it, because they always loved as

much of it as they could endure. At length, they venture to take a single blast, and are pleased with the sensation. If they do not take a second it is not because they have a dislike to it, but because they are not able to endure it. The moment they imagine themselves able, they venture to take two; and after they find they can endure this they take three. Thus they continue increasing the proportion, because they are pleased with the stronger sensation which results from it. Hence we find, that those who can endure the strong sensation prefer it to the weaker; that no person is satisfied with mild tobacco who can endure stronger, nor even with stronger if he can endure the strongest; and that he who is obliged to smoke mild tobacco does so, not because he prefers it to the strong, but because he has not nerve to endure it stronger. There is no person who smokes mild tobacco who will not avow that he wishes he could take it stronger, and who does not, perhaps, venture sometimes to do so in obedience to this wish, except his reason triumphs over his natural propensity to strong sensations, and advises him either to moderate this propensity, or abandon smoking altogether.

Mr. Knight, in accounting for the preference we give to tastes originally disagreeable, to those simple tastes with which we are pleased in our youth, calls the former acquired, and the latter natural,

tastes; and says that, "all those tastes which are natural, lose, and all those which are unnatural, acquire strength by indulgence." Among which he instances the taste and smell of tobacco. This does not appear to me to be philosophical language. It is not philosophical to call the taste of tobacco unnatural; first, because it is a natural plant; secondly, because if the taste which it produces be unnatural, it follows that the taste which it produces is not that which it ought to produce, but some other, for whatever produces what it ought to produce, necessarily produces a natural effect. Tobacco has the same taste to all men: this uniform effect must, consequently, be natural; nor indeed can any production of nature produce an unnatural effect, for even admitting that it does not produce the same effect in different individuals, the effect produced in each is still natural, because it arose not from any difference of operation in the cause, but from organical differences in the subjects acted upon. All tastes then are natural tastes, nor is there any thing gained by calling them *acquired*, as this epithet cannot serve to distinguish them from others. Man is born without ideas or relishes of any kind, so that he can have no particular taste which can be called natural before the body or fluid which produces this taste be received into the mouth. The taste of tobacco is communicated in the same manner,

and the knowledge of both is acquired by the same means, and, therefore, one is as much an acquired taste as the other. The true cause, then, of the greater pleasure which tobacco affords, is, as I have already shewn, the strong and animating sensation which it produces.

The sensible properties, therefore, of all substances which affect the animal spirits are pleasing, until their action upon the organ becomes actually insupportable. The degree of pleasure always depends on the degree of power which we possess of supporting the sensations by which it is produced, and the degree of pain depends, in like manner, on our own impotency, or incapability of enjoyment.

This is the true rule by which all our organic pleasures and pains are determined. The greater power we possess of enjoying any pleasure, or of supporting the sensation by which it is produced, the greater is our desire for it; and the greater our desire, the more exquisite is the pleasure which attends its gratification. Impotent desires produce no pleasure, even when they are gratified; but the gratification of strong desires produce a pleasure exactly proportionate to the strength of the craving which solicits its enjoyment. When the stomach is voracious, the greater is our power of digestion, and our desire of eating; and the pleasure of eating is always proportionate to the

strength of this desire. In fact, the commonest fare is luxury to a hungry stomach.

*Jejunus raro stomachus vulgaria temnit.*—HOR.

If the power of digestion were not always proportionate to our desire for food, a glutton would soon be carried off by indigestion and internal obstructions; and, if our relish for food were not in like manner proportionate to the cravings of the stomach, we should equally perish, because the mouth would reject that nourishment of which the stomach stood in need. It is true, the power of digestion does not always equal the desire for food, but this arises not from natural, but from artificial desires. He who is governed by the simple impulses of the stomach, never seeks for more food than he is able to digest, as is the case with almost all brute animals, but the mind creates new impulses of its own, and has recourse to artificial stimuli, to assist it in procuring enjoyments of which nature does not stand in need. These enjoyments, however, it must be recollected, are sensations of a stronger nature than those which the animal economy requires, which is a new evidence that, constituted as we are, strong sensations are, of all others, the most pleasing and agreeable to us.

To all men, therefore, the infirm as well as the strong, powerful sensations are pleasing, except

in the three instances already mentioned. Increase a slight disagreeable sensation and it becomes immediately pleasing. A grating sound produces a disagreeable sensation, but increase it suddenly to the utmost height, and you feel an immediate pleasure. The more tremendous the sound, the more we delight in it, unless it actually stuns us, and then it becomes painful. I am aware that the sensation produced by loud sound wants that character of gaiety and lightness to which we give the name of pleasure, but it must be recollected, that pleasure is not confined to one modification of feeling; and that it is a genus which embraces every sensation, or impression, in which we delight, or which we do not feel inclined to suppress, the moment it is felt. If a tremendous, loud, grating sound be not pleasing, why do we stand to listen to it? Why are we all attention, at the moment, and seem fearful of losing the slightest portion of the effect. Why, then, is the soul pleased with a loud, and displeased with a low, grating sound? Evidently because it delights in strong sensations, not actually painful. If it be asked, what constitutes a slight, what a strong, and what a painful sensation, I reply, our own feelings, what is a slight sensation to one, being a strong sensation to another, and a painful to a third. Perhaps, however, something like a rule may be laid down, that may enable us to distinguish where each of these sensations terminate.

A sensation that passes not to the *sensorium commune*, or sensitive soul, but continues to affect only the primary sensory or organ through which it is received, may be properly called a slight sensation ; not that we can feel any organic sensation of which the *sensorium commune*, or soul, is ignorant, but it feels them as something external, something incapable of moving it to pleasure, or forcing it to pain. Thus, if a man takes me by the hand, I feel a sensation where his hand is in contact with mine ; but this is the only sensation I feel ; and, therefore, I call it a slight sensation : but if I happen to be in love, and that the object of my affections takes me by the hand, I feel a sensation, as before, in my hand, and this sensation is, as in the former case, a slight one ; but then I feel another sensation, of which I was in the former instance totally unconscious, and this sensation is felt, not in the hands or feet, or any particular member that I can mention : it is felt, if I may use the expression, every where and no where. In a word, it pervades the whole frame. This is what I would call a strong sensation, namely, a sensation that does not confine itself to the part where it was first felt, but passes on like an electric shock, and communicates itself to all parts of the system. These are the sensations which are always pleasing, unless they act so powerfully on the member through which they are communicated as to give actual pain, and, even then, they are pleas-

ing, unless the pain be so intense as to render us incapable of feeling the internal pleasing emotion. The pleasure which a lover enjoys in stealing a kiss from his fair one, is so great, that he is insensible of pain though she should happen to bite his lips in the very act ; but if he received the same bite from a person to whom he had no attachment, he would feel it acutely. The reason is obvious : the strong internal sensation produced by the kiss extinguishes the pain which is felt in the lips, and converts it into a pleasing sensation ; but if she bit off the lip altogether, the internal pleasing emotion produced by the kiss yields at the moment, to the intensity of the pain, and, therefore, the internal pleasure is not felt until the pain abates. This, however, does not prove that the strong internal sensation is not pleasing, for though, at the moment, it is not sensibly felt, yet its latent existence is sufficiently proved by this circumstance alone, that it abates the acuteness of the pain ; for he whose lip is bit off by the beloved object of his affections, does not feel half the pain experienced by the man who loses his lip by the bite of a dog.

In expelling disagreeable organic sensations, however, the soul can exert little power. If I prick my finger with a pin, I have no power of expelling the sensation. I do not feel myself capable of making any exertion to that effect. On the other hand, if a slight sensation be agreeable to the soul, instead of wishing to expel it from the



organ, it communes with it immediately, and exhausts the little portion of pleasure it is capable of imparting, unless a more pleasing object offers it higher enjoyment. The lighter sensation is always lost in the stronger. The organic senses are affected by the slightest impressions, but the soul, not being so easily moved, the sensations are felt only in the organs by which they are received, unless the pain be so intense as to transfix the soul. Thus, if I receive a slight blow on the arm, the sensation is felt in the part of the arm that receives the blow; but if I receive a powerful blow on any part of the body, by which I am knocked down, and stunned, or severely hurt, the pain is not felt more in the part where the injury was received, than in any other part of the body, as the soul flies immediately to its relief, and disperses the pain over the entire frame. It is only after the soul has withdrawn its attention from the wounded part, that the pain becomes local, and distinctly felt where the injury was received.

It is certain, then, that the soul comes forward, and exerts its energies only when external circumstances produce strong sensations. Hence we find, that men who have been frequently placed in trying situations, or situations that require a strong and diligent appropriation of the mental faculties, generally possess more mind and soul, or a greater ductility or pliability of the intellectual faculties to the exigencies and circumstances of time and

place than others. There is little soul where there is little occasion for it, that is, where the objects we aim at require little more than animal or instinctive perception. Hence it is, that savages are not only stupid, but likewise indolent. Their mental powers remain always dormant, because they are strangers to the complicated interests of society, and are consequently never placed in situations which call forth energies unknown to us all, till they are elicited by circumstances.

As the soul, then, comes forward only on great occasions, it is obvious, that it is little affected by slight impressions, whether they be of an agreeable or disagreeable character. But when the organic sense is so powerfully affected, that the soul is forced out of its tranquil situation, and obliged to take part, or sympathize with the organic impression, this sensation ceases to be a slight one, and belongs to those strong sensations which are pleasing to the soul. Strong sensations again become painful when their intensity is so great as to render them insupportable.

The organ of sight is the most refined, spiritual and intellectual, of all our organs, the most discriminating, and the most difficult to be pleased in the selection of its objects, and yet, spite of its fastidiousness, it is pleased even with deformity, whenever this deformity produces a strong sensation. The sensation produced by ugliness, not-

withstanding the power of mental associations, becomes pleasing, when it produces a strong impression, that is, when ugliness is perceived in the highest degree. If an advertisement announced that the ugliest woman in Europe was to exhibit herself in London, there is little doubt but that thousands would attend the exhibition. Will it be said, that this would not arise from any pleasure or gratification which her presence afforded them? Why, then, should they crowd to see her? Are not facts more to be depended on than assertions? I admit that none of the spectators might like her person; but this argues nothing, for it is still evident that they like the strong sensation which her appearance is fitted to produce.

How many climb the most dangerous precipices at the peril of their lives, merely to enjoy the strong sensation which it excites: how many explore subterraneous caverns, and proceed a considerable distance from the entrance, through no possible motive but that of gratifying the restless spirit of curiosity alone. I here use curiosity in the common acceptation of the term; but surely I will not be told, that it is curiosity, and not a passion for strong sensations, that prompts any person to visit these dark retreats, for we can form no idea of curiosity, abstracted from this passion. Curiosity is the term by which we express that feeling in man which prompts him to see what he

never saw before, to discover what he never knew before, to place himself in circumstances and situations in which he was never placed before. But why do we love to see what we never saw before? Certainly, for no other reason than that of enjoying the sensation which it produces. Accordingly, we run to see the ugliest and most deformed animals in nature, if we have never seen them before. If the sight of an ugly animal produced a disagreeable sensation, why do we go and see it? The very circumstance of going proves the sensation which it excites to be agreeable to us. But, it will be said, we cannot tell what sensation it may produce until we see it first; that we can, therefore, have no certainty, whether it be agreeable or not, and that, consequently, it is curiosity, and not the love of the sensation which prompts us to go. These objections may appear very specious, but I do not understand them; and I suspect they are as unintelligible to those who make them as they are to me. If we cannot tell what sensation it may produce till we see it first, why do we go to see it? The reason is obvious: because we know, from our own experience, that we like all sensations by which we are strongly moved, and that new sensations affect us more powerfully than those to which we have been long accustomed. If it should be said, that we have no conviction of the kind, I would ask, why do we go, after being told by

those who have seen the animal, what sort of sensation it produces. Now, let them describe the sensation as they will, it does not prevent us from going. On the contrary, the description is so far from preventing us, that the parent who wishes to gratify his children, takes them along with him, to enjoy the pleasure which he promises himself. This he would do, were he even assured before hand that the animal was the most deformed which imagination can conceive. In fact, the more deformed any animal is represented, the more powerful is the desire that prompts us to see him ; and hence it is, that we are more desirous of seeing monsters than deformed natural objects. If, however, he be not a deformed animal, the more beautiful he is described, the more the passion for seeing him is excited. So far, then, as regards momentary pleasures, we prefer the two extremes, of beauty and ugliness, simply because we prefer strong sensations to weak ones. This cannot arise from curiosity, because curiosity is as much gratified by seeing a cat, if we have never seen one before, as by seeing a zebra or a rhinoceros. Yet we prefer the two latter, because one is a most beautiful, and the other a very ugly animal. If it be curiosity that prompts us to see an ugly animal, why do we go see him a second time? Why do we bring others along with us, and imagine we gratify them by so doing? If curiosity accounts for

our going the first time, it cannot explain the cause of our going a second. The fact is, that curiosity explains nothing: it is a mere bug-bear, by which people account for things which they do not understand, as the ancient philosophers explained all physical effects by calling them operations of *nature*. Curiosity is a term expressing an abstract idea, not a thing: there is nothing in nature called curiosity; and, consequently, what has no existence cannot be the cause which prompts us to go and see an ugly animal. To be brief, curiosity is not the cause of any thing: it is, as I have already observed, a feeling within us, but not the cause of a feeling, for all our feelings are impressions or effects produced by other causes. When I desire to see a thing, I say I am curious to see it, but it is absurd to say, that my being curious to see it, is the reason why I desire to see it, for being curious to see it, is here only another term for a desire to see it. Whatever creates the desire in me, is the very thing that creates my curiosity, so that curiosity and desire are both effects, emanating from the same cause; or, rather, they are different terms to express the same effect. Whatever, then, creates my desire of seeing any thing, is the cause of my being curious to see it, so that, in all cases, curiosity is an effect, and not a cause.

But it will be argued that there are many strong sensations and agitations of the soul which are by

no means pleasing, and yet not so intense as to be insufferably painful, such as arise from losses in trade, the reflections of an ill-spent life, the recollection of former sufferings, or the privations of the moment, the intrusion of unwelcome visitors, &c. The sensations produced by the reflections of an ill-spent life, and the recollections of former sufferings or disgraces, are evidently sensations that come within the first and third exceptions which I have made to the pleasures arising from strong sensations. The reflections of an ill-spent life torment only the individual who leads it. The rest of mankind can reflect upon an ill-spent life without pain. It is so with losses in trade: it is only he who feels the loss that is pained by reflecting upon it. The disagreeable sensations produced by unwelcome visitors, affect us also as individuals, not as men in general. What renders such visits disagreeable is the absence of the more agreeable sensations we fancy we might enjoy, had they not interrupted us. If, for instance, their society be insipid, we are uneasy, not because they produce disagreeable sensations in us, but because they produce none at all. This is an affection of the mind, not of the senses, and proves rather, how uneasy it is in the absence of sensations, than how disagreeable it is rendered by them. If our disagreeable sensations arise from our being averse to company, at the moment, the effect arises from the

particular situation of our mind, at that moment ; and, consequently, affects us as individuals, not as men in general. If they begin to abuse us, the disagreeable sensation arises from the same cause ; for abuse, and even blows, are disagreeable only to the person who receives them : to the rest of mankind they are pleasing, because they produce a strong sensation. We cannot distinguish the agreeable from the disagreeable, except by the *common feeling* of mankind. The feelings of an individual determine nothing. Now, if abuse produce disagreeable sensations, why do we see a crowd collected round any two who begin to abuse each other in the street ? Is it not obvious that this abuse gives them pleasure, simply, because it produces a sensation sufficiently strong to render it interesting ? If it be said that none stop to look on but the common people, I reply, that it is only from the common people we can discover what human nature is. All the difference between cultivated and uncultivated society is the work of the mind ; but with the revolutions performed by mental operations, the philosopher has nothing to do, for if he take the operations of the mind into consideration, in treating of human nature, he has no *data* for reasoning, no ground to stand upon, because the mind acts differently in different people, whereas human nature is nearly the same in all, while it is suffered to act in its own way, and receives no



check from mental associations. We cannot tell what becomes of a man, from the moment he suffers himself to be carried away by the mind, that is, from the moment he suffers the mind to convince him of things which are not in unison with his own feelings, sensations, and natural sympathies. So long as the intellect and the senses travel together, so long human nature is itself; but the moment they separate, the moment we begin to lend a deaf ear to our feelings,—to consider them as a blind instinct, on which no reliance can be placed, we become people with whom the philosopher has no concern, for there is no certainty to what extremes the mind may lead us. Perhaps the worst that may happen to us is to become fanatics or bigots, but it is just as natural that we become fools or madmen. It may be replied, however, that those who pass on, and take no heed of an abuse or riot, are much greater in number than those who stop. Before this be admitted, we must ascertain whether it be a natural aversion for the sensation produced by a riot that makes the majority pass on, and take no heed, or whether their doing so does not arise from some other cause. That natural aversion has little to do in promoting this effect, can, I believe, be easily proved. The greater part of those who pass on are engaged in their own business, and experience informs us that the greater part of mankind seldom attend to, or

indulge their natural propensities, when such an indulgence interferes with their immediate interests ; for if self-preservation be the first law of Nature, self-interest may be considered the second, both being different modifications of self-love. The question, then, can only regard those who walk the street for their mere amusement, having no business to attend to. If these stop, they have no reason for doing so but to increase that happiness after which all men are in pursuit ; for though they have nothing to do, it is evident they would not stop and look on, if the sensation produced were not agreeable to them. But it may be said, that many who have no business to attend to, would not, still, be seen witnessing a riot. I believe it. But why would they not be seen ? Because their pride prevents them : because they think it would be degrading to them in the eyes of the world. The effect, then, is produced by pride, not by any thing disagreeable in the sensation, and what proceeds from pride is not the result of sensible impressions, pride being the offspring of education, high birth, mental associations, or some other accident. It is not, therefore, grafted in the original constitution of man, and must, consequently, be traced to the subsequent operations of the mind. In a word, there is not a person who passes by where a riot happens, but stops and looks on, unless he be prevented by business, pride, or

some other mental influence. Some, for instance, will not stop through fear; but fear is a mental influence. Some will not stop because they are taught to think it vulgar: these are also prevented by mental influences, because whatever proceeds from teaching, instruction, and education, necessarily proceeds from the mind, no matter whether what we are taught be true or false. Nature produces her own effects upon us without any assistance from education, so that all that she cannot produce of herself must necessarily proceed from the mind. The sensations produced in us, therefore, by the laws of nature, or the agency of natural objects, are perfectly distinct from those produced by education, even when education teaches nothing but truth; but, in general, I believe half what we are taught were better untaught. Nature and education seldom go hand in hand; and whenever they separate, education is error. We have no *data* for reasoning but our own feelings and sensations, which are, in other words, the impressions made upon us by the works of nature. If we cannot trust to these impressions, we have nothing else to trust to. To say that we should trust to reason, is only saying, that we should trust to the testimony of our own feelings: for we can reason only from what we know, and he who rejects all the knowledge he acquires through the medium of the senses, knows nothing,

and therefore cannot reason at all. That nature and education do not always go together, is a fact of which every day's experience affords us a thousand proofs. Perhaps no proof can be stronger, and certainly none more to the point, than one drawn from the theory of sensations which I have here advanced. External influences excite in us a variety of pleasing sensations, emotions, and passions: and we are so constituted by nature, that these emotions, unless we make a painful effort to suppress them, appear visibly in our countenance. Hence, except in rogues and hypocrites, the countenance may be always trusted to, as a faithful index to the mind. Nature then evidently intended, that the face should be a portrait of the mind, because we find it is so in every man who does not seek to counteract her impressions. But does education teach the same doctrine? I regret to say, her precepts are so directly opposed to those of nature, in this respect, that there is little room left for surprise at Rousseau's asserting that "education confines the natural parts, effaces the grand qualities of the soul to substitute such as are trifling and apparent, but have no reality." Education teaches a child, never to suffer the internal emotion to suffuse the countenance. No matter, therefore, whether a child of quality be present at a tragedy or a comedy: he looks on the most tragical and the most comic scenes with a perfect

*sang-froid*, because he is told it is vulgar to appear affected by any external influence. To make a child thus suppress his feelings, and look on the most comic and ludicrous scenes with perfect indifference, is, in other words, to eradicate nature, to enclose the heart in a case of steel, and render it not only inexorable to, but insensible of, every sympathetic impulse to which unsophisticated nature spontaneously resigns itself. How enviable is the savage state compared with an education of so perverted and perverting a character.

If, then, we distinguish the agreeable from the disagreeable by the *common feeling* of mankind, it is obvious, that the sensation produced by abuse, &c. is a pleasing sensation, simply because all strong sensations are pleasing, which are not actually painful, &c. Abuse is only disagreeable to the individual abused, because it exposes him to the reflection, and perhaps to the ridicule of others, if he submit to it. Now, if he cannot resist it, he must submit, and it is this reflection on his own weakness, or, in other words, the particular situation in which he is placed, not the abuse, that gives him pain. A person capable of repelling abuse, and of punishing it, feels no disagreeable sensation in being abused: on the contrary, the satisfaction of punishing it is so great a pleasure to some people, that they seek to be abused. A person, therefore, confident of his own strength, or of the power he possesses of ob-

taining satisfaction, is never irritated by abuse, whether he be of an irritable, or of a calm, philosophic temper. If the former, nothing gives him greater pleasure, than the satisfaction of punishing the person who abuses him:—if the latter, he is pleased with abuse, first because he has nothing to dread from the person who abuses him: secondly, because it gives him an opportunity of exercising his philosophy in witnessing the weakness of human nature, and thirdly, because in listening to abuse with calmness, he feels his superiority over the person by whom he is abused, and the advantage of that philosophy which restrains him from punishing the offender. A strong man, therefore, can never be irritated by the abuse of a weak man unless he feel conscious of deserving it. This consciousness must consequently arise from recollecting some former transaction in which he used him ill; and then he is affected by abuse as an individual, not as a man, in general. Hence all strong sensations, are pleasing which affect us, not as individuals, but as men in general, unless they be intolerably painful, or too long continued. There is scarcely any person who consults his own feelings, who will not find that all his disagreeable sensations, arise out of the particular situation in which he is placed. There is no situation, however, in which an individual can be placed, that excites so many disagreeable sensations, as the reflections

and associations to which it gives rise. These reflections are the most prolific source of human misery. The money I lose in trade, for instance, can produce no sensations in me, of any kind; for with regard to me, it has no existence. It is the reflection on the loss which I have suffered, therefore, that makes me unhappy. In fact, every object in nature that produces a strong sensation, produces a pleasing one, unless it be so intense as to create actual pain; or that the pleasure it is calculated to impart be counteracted by some mental association, or reflection, arising out of individual circumstances. These associations, it is true, are so numerous, particularly with people who are disposed to be unhappy, that disagreeable sensations are more frequently felt by some people than agreeable ones; but in every instance, where such sensations are felt, nothing can be more easy than to shew, that they arise from affecting us as individuals, not as men in general, and that whatever produces a strong sensation in us, produces also a pleasing one, if the sensation be the same which it would produce in the generality of mankind.

It is difficult for any person who has paid little attention to the subject, to conceive how powerfully associations and reflections, arising from individual circumstances, influence, suppress, or heighten all our natural pleasures, so that the sensation which any external influence produces in

our youth before circumstances begin to place us in particular situations, and exercise their dominion over us, is hardly ever found to be the same which it produces in our riper years. In youth, almost all sensations, and universally all strong sensations, are agreeable to us, unless they be actually painful, because we receive every impression as it comes, without any mental modification. In youth, then, we are affected as men in general, not as individuals, a circumstance which has not been remarked by any philosopher. The sensation produced in us by every influence, or existing cause, is that which nature intended it to produce in the bulk of mankind. In youth we never inquire how our sensations are produced, nor do we doubt the reality of the impressions which we receive at the moment. It is the philosopher alone, whose

Heart, distrusting, asks if this be joy.

When any sensible agency awakens in his breast the slumbering recipients of pleasure, he repels its influence, either because he begins to consider that this pleasure will be of short duration, and that the moment is at hand when he must abandon its enjoyment, without being able to replace it; or because he associates some idea with the cause of the pleasure which destroys its effect. A beautiful woman will communicate pleasure to a large company of men, but if there be one among them who knows her to be an infamous character, he will, so



far from enjoying any pleasure, feel a sensation extremely disagreeable. Now it is obvious, that the impression she makes on the rest of the company is the natural impression, or the impression which her sensible appearance is intended by nature to produce; and that the impression she makes on this individual, does not arise from her appearance, but from his possessing a particular knowledge of which they are ignorant: that is, from his being placed in a particular situation, or in other words, from his being acted upon as an individual, not as a man in general. His knowledge, then, serves only to render him unhappy, because it suggests reflections which intercept the pleasure he would otherwise enjoy. Solomon, therefore says wisely, that he who increaseth knowledge increaseth sorrow. The rest are happy, because they feel only the impression which the object before them is calculated to excite, and which it is calculated to excite in all men who are guided by their natural feelings. On the other hand, if the person who is rendered so unhappy by her presence, knew her to be of a most angelic, amiable disposition;—if he were acquainted with her private virtues, and the tender sensibilities of her heart, he would feel infinitely more pleasure in her society, than any other person in the company; so that mental associations always serve to increase or diminish our natural pleasures. Of this truth, Hutchinson, from whom many of

our late metaphysicians have borrowed a considerable portion of their philosophy, seems to have had a very distinct perception. "The simple ideas," he says, "raised in different persons by the same object, are probably some way different, when they disagree in their approbation, or dislike, and, in the same person, when his fancy, at one time, differs from what it was at another. This will appear from reflecting on these objects to which we have now an aversion, though they were formerly agreeable: and we shall generally find, that there is some accidental conjunction of a disagreeable idea, which always recurs with the object, as in those wines to which men acquire an aversion after they have taken them in an emetic preparation. In this case, we are conscious that the idea is altered from what it was when that wine was agreeable, by the conjunction of the ideas of loathing and sickness of the stomach. The like change of idea may be insensibly made by the change of our bodies, as we advance in years, or when we are accustomed to any object, which may occasion indifference towards meats we were fond of in our childhood, and may make some objects cease to raise the disagreeable ideas which they excited upon our first use of them. Many of our simple perceptions are disagreeable only through the great intenseness of the quality; thus moderate light is agreeable; very strong light may be painful; moderate bitter may

be pleasant : a higher degree may be offensive. A change in our organs will necessarily occasion a change in the intenseness of the perception at least, nay, sometimes will occasion a quite contrary perception." This is the reasoning of a philosopher. What Hutchinson, however, calls a simple perception, I call a simple feeling, that is, a feeling excited by a simple natural cause, uninfluenced by any mental associations. As to perceptions, they are neither agreeable nor the contrary, for when any thing we perceive creates a painful sensation, this sensation is perfectly distinct from the perception. When I look with emotion upon an object that excites no emotion in another, it is obvious that he has a perception of the object as well as I have. The emotion, consequently, which the perception excites in me, must be different from the perception itself, for if not, he would be moved as well as I am. In him, therefore, the object excites a mere perception, but in me it excites a perception, and something else ; and this something else, which I call an emotion, sensation, or as the case may be, must necessarily be different from the simple perception which it excites in both of us, and in which alone we agree. But it may be said, that when an object excites a sensation, or emotion in me which it excites in no one else, this sensation cannot be attributed to the object, but to mental associations, for if the object was calculated to produce it, the

effect must have been equally felt by us both. If this argument be worth any thing, it proves, that when two men take an emetic, on one of whom it produces no effect, and on the other of whom it produces a very powerful one, the effect produced on the latter must not be attributed to the emetic, for if the emetic were calculated to produce such an effect, it must have produced it in both of them. Common sense is sufficient to perceive the absurdity of such an argument, for every one knows, that the emetic acted equally on both, though both were not equally passive, or flexible in yielding to its action. If all men were equally susceptible of impressions, all natural objects would produce the same effect upon them all, making allowances for mental associations. These associations, which always arise from our being affected as individuals, not as men in general, are the most prolific source of disagreeable sensations, which, though not actually painful, are still such as we do not relish. Thus, people whose associations are few, or in other words, ignorant people, are generally pleased with every sensation, because the sensation produced in them is always that which the exciting cause is naturally calculated to produce. But the moment the mind begins to examine how far the object is calculated to please, it either increases or diminishes the natural sensation. Instead, therefore, of being a simple sensation, it becomes a mixed feeling, de-

living part of its nature from the mind, and part from the senses. We cannot distinguish, it is true, such a feeling from a simple sensation, because the manner in which we are affected by simple sensations themselves are infinitely diversified; but we can easily perceive, that the sensation which an object produces in a hundred men, who receive the impression unmixed with any mental association, will be extremely different from that which it produces in a hundred literary men. In the former, the sensation will be nearly the same in all, because it produces a mere simple sensation in each of them, unmodified by any mental operation. Their sensations will always be to each other, in the same ratio as their degrees of natural susceptibility of impressions; but in the latter, there are scarcely two, whose sensations are the same, or even resemble each other, because the simple sensation which the object was naturally fitted to produce, is heightened, diminished, diversified, mingled with, or broken by, a thousand other sensations arising from such mental associations as the object suggested to the mind of each. In no two of them, however, will it awaken the same associations, because each of them takes his from the particular department of literature which he has chiefly cultivated. In poetry alone, how different are the sensations which the same object would excite in poets of a different genius. In Homer, it might

serve to give a new *impetus* to the anger of Achilles, the wrath of Diomedes, or the unbending, uncompromising, and self-sufficient valour of the stubborn Ajax. In Virgil it would associate with milder scenes, and awaken recollections of a more tender and endearing character. The kindred images which it would suggest to the imagination of Horace would aptly serve to expose some absurdity, or recommend some virtue, in the human character; while it would furnish Milton with some of those sublime images which lead us to the contemplation of immaterial existence, and of scenes, which, though laid in another world, have their sole existence, perhaps, in the creative imagination of the poet.

From the whole of what I have advanced on this subject, it is obvious, that we are so constituted by the Deity, as to receive pleasure of one kind or other from every feeling that puts the soul into action, except as before excepted. There is not an object in nature but will render those men unhappy, who delight, if I may use the expression, in gloomy images. I call this attachment to gloomy images, *delight*; for every man must delight in that to which he is attached, and some men are eternally dwelling on dark-browed images, and scenes of horror. Such men may be properly said to take a pleasure in pain, for a pleasing object is more painful to them, than a disagreeable one,

simply because when the object is disagreeable, they view it as it is, without wishing to heighten its deformity; whereas an agreeable object sends them immediately in pursuit of some disagreeable image, or reflection that dispels its charms, and all the pleasing sensations which it is calculated to impart. Such men, always

Distrusting, ask, if this be joy,—

and to prove that it is not joy, they have recourse to the melancholy reflection, that all pleasure is of short duration, if they have no other means of proving it. But while the mind thus serves to embitter the most pleasing sensations which natural objects produce, it has the same power of giving new zest and rapture to all our natural pleasures. The poet who is always a lover of nature, a lover of those early impressions which he felt in his youth, who retains and cherishes their memory as a pledge of the purest and most exquisite happiness which life can bestow, enjoys a continual feast through life, because he always associates some image of felicity to the most disagreeable and painful object. By the potent spell of association alone, he converts pain into pleasure, a proof that all our happiness depends on ourselves, when our organic senses are perfect, and that pain is always the inseparable attendant of a distempered mind, a mind that loves to be unhappy, and in obedience to this pro-

pensity, converts all the incipient vibrations of pleasure into actual and positive pain.

A slight review of the senses will confirm the doctrine which I have advanced in this chapter, relative to sensations ; and shew, that all pain is the extreme of pleasure, and that the strongest sensations are always the most pleasing, where they do not rise to this painful extreme. Gay and splendid is more pleasing than dull and faded colouring, because it excites a stronger sensation ; yet, when it becomes too brilliant and glaring, the sensation ceases to be pleasing, because it is converted into a mere organical sensation, and affects only the eye, to which it becomes painful. The sense of hearing is equally gratified with sounds which produce strong sensations, such as are clear, shrill, distinct, and resonant ; but sharp and tinkling sounds produce pain, because they affect only the primary sensory by which they are received, the soul refusing to admit them farther, or sympathize with them. The olfactory nerves are but slightly pleased with faded odours, but the pleasure increases with their degree of poignancy, till this degree becomes too pungent and stimulating, and then the pleasure is converted into pain, because it is felt only in the primary sensory. The taste is subject to the same law, delighting in rich and stimulating flavours, relishes, sauces, and whatever tends to affect not the mere organ of the tongue, but to put the entire



man, the entire animal economy into action. The sense of feeling delights not in bodies that produce a mere sensation in the organs of touch. The bodies most pleasing to it, are those which, not confining the sensation to the external organ, communicates it to the entire frame. Hence it happens, that although all the senses impart pleasure, by exciting a certain modification of feeling, yet the external sense of feeling, which is properly extended over the whole surface of the body, is very limited in the pleasure which it imparts; as there is hardly any external body which we touch that communicates the organical feeling to the soul except woman alone. As then there is no positive pleasure without this strong internal feeling that electrifies the soul, and as no object communicates this feeling in any positive degree, through the medium of feeling, but woman, it follows, that the pleasures arising from the external sense of feeling, are confined to the last best work of the creation. Whatever pleases the external sense of feeling, invariably pleases the sight; but innumerable objects please the sight which impart no pleasure to the feeling. Thus we delight in seeing a beautiful painting, but if we touch it, the feeling cannot distinguish the sensation, from that produced by common canvas. In fact, the external sense of feeling is extremely limited in its pleasures, for I know of no object that imparts any sensible pleasure by the

touch, but that which I have mentioned. Burke says, there is a pleasure in feeling smooth and soft bodies; but I suspect this pleasure arises, not so much from smoothness, as from association. The fair sex possess both these qualities, and our natural attachment to them, inclines us to suppose, that whatever is soft and smooth, must also be pleasing. Without entering, however, into speculative ideas on the subject, one thing is obvious, that in the sense of feeling, as in all the other senses, the bodies most pleasing to us are those which impart a sensation that confines itself not to the external organ, but pervades the entire frame by a certain inexpressible, though communicable impulse.

But it will be said, that all true pleasure and happiness consist in moderation, that beauty itself, which is the most pleasing of all objects, is a medium between extremes, and that pleasures verging upon extremes are always dangerous. All this I admit; but while it is certain, that pleasure verging on pain is dangerous, it is equally certain, that the higher pleasures are the more exquisite while they last, and the most sensibly enjoyed. The enjoyment of ardent pleasures, however, cannot last long; and hence we very justly praise moderate enjoyment. This tempered pleasure is always more pleasing to a well-regulated mind; but the extreme of pleasure is always more agreeable to

the natural man, to him who never thinks on the consequence of indulging the desires of the moment, but enjoys whatever he finds most pleasing while he is capable of enjoying it. The great enjoyment we derive in abstaining from these pleasures arises from the reflection or consciousness, that we are fulfilling a moral duty, that by tempering our enjoyments, we render them more permanent, and retain the power of renewing them whenever we will. These, however, are mental pleasures, not the pleasures of sensation, which derives all its enjoyments from yielding instinctively to every pleasing impulse.

## CHAP. IX.

*Emotions and Passions, whatever be their Nature and Character, universally pleasing to those by whom they are felt. Objections answered.*

WHAT I have said in the foregoing chapter chiefly regards the pleasures arising from strong sensations, and though these sensations are intimately allied with our emotions and passions, it will still be proper to treat of the latter by themselves, as there is this difference between them and our sensations, that the latter are painful whenever they reach to a certain degree of intensity, whereas our emotions and passions are universally pleasing. It matters not, whether they affect us as individuals, or as men in general; whether they be moderate or intense; whether they be momentary or permanent: in all cases, and under all circumstances, pleasure is the inseparable attendant of our emotions and passions. This will appear evident from the following view of their nature, and modes of operation.

All the phenomena of mind and its affections, of life and its enjoyments, may be traced, as I have already observed, to three distinct sources—*abstrac-*

*tion, sensation, and will.* Two of these faculties are active, the other passive. The soul acts when it wills, when it traces relations and differences, to arrive at conclusions; and when it combines, diversifies, and modifies the primary ideas which it has received through the medium of sense; but it is passive when affected by organical impressions. The soul, however, is, in all cases, either the agent or percipient, the body being a mere instrument in such operations as require its instrumentality. Sensible vision, for instance, is performed through the medium of the eye, but it is not the eye that sees but the soul; or, if it be the eye, it is not the material eye, but the soul living in this material eye, and hence taking cognizance of all its objects. If the body were all eye, the soul would see in all directions; but, constituted as we are, the rays of light falling on other parts of the body, cannot communicate themselves to the soul. The eye is the only part of the body sufficiently tender, sufficiently etherealized, or spiritualized, to be sensible of the action of such minute particles as those of light, and consequently the only part which can perceive the bodies by which they are reflected. The eye is, therefore, all soul, and, accordingly, its rapidity and extreme sensibility, wonderfully accord with its ethereal nature. Abstraction, sensation, and will, are therefore, no qualities of matter, for pure matter cannot feel, much less perceive or will. If

feeling were a quality of matter, the fire which warms us, would feel the heat by which it is consumed. Sensation is, therefore, as much a faculty of the soul, as abstraction and will, though universally considered as belonging to the material part of our nature. The only difference is, that abstraction and will are active faculties of the soul, while sensation is a faculty perfectly passive. The soul does not act when it is sensible of an impression : it is acted upon, and merely perceives the effect of the agency which acts upon it. It cannot avoid feeling this impression, whether it wills it or not, and therefore the sensation is produced by no act of its own. By abstraction, as an act of the soul, I mean intellectual perception, reflection, the power of comparing, analyzing, &c. The soul perceives through the eye that grass is green : this is a sensation ; but it perceives by comparison and reflection, that virtue is preferable to vice, and truth to falsehood, that a part is not equal to the whole, &c. These are not sensations, but intellectual perceptions. The soul has no power over what is properly called its sensations, while the organs through which it feels them are acted upon by their proper objects. If I prick my finger with a pin, I cannot help feeling pain, the soul having no power by which it can repel this sensation, or escape from feeling it. The only faculty which it can exercise, in this case, is that of informing me,

that such a sensation is not pleasing to it, and of directing me not to apply the pin to my finger. The soul then has the power of avoiding any sensation which it dislikes, by avoiding the object by which the sensation is produced ; but when once it suffers the object to act upon the organ, it has no power of resisting the sensation till the object be removed, and not even then, at all times. The soul is situated in the same manner with regard to its intellectual perceptions. Whenever it perceives any truth clearly, it cannot help perceiving it ;—it cannot bring itself to a conviction, that this truth is a falsehood. It is just as impossible for the soul to confound truth with error, when once it perceives the distinction, as it is for God to do any thing that implies a contradiction. It is not, however, to be inferred from this, that the soul has no free will, for the argument that would prove it, would prove also, that God is not omnipotent. Though the soul is not at liberty to perceive the truth of a proposition, and still believe it not true, it is at liberty to withdraw from the consideration of the truth altogether, and direct its attention to other contemplations. There is this difference, however, between our perceptions and feelings that we may dismiss the former immediately, while the latter frequently continue to affect us, after the agency by which they were first excited has ceased to act. A painful sensation cannot be removed, if it arise

from an injury received in any part of the body, until the part affected be healed ; but this continued sensation, though felt by the soul, is never cherished by it. The soul never embraces it, never identifies it with its own existence. It keeps it as far removed from it as possible, and would extinguish it altogether if it were able. It is obvious, then, that the continuation of this disagreeable sensation owes no part of its existence to the will, that it arises solely from the original, sensible agency by which it was produced, that the soul was passive with regard to its original production, and is still passive with regard to its continuation, and consequently that it never ceases to be, what it originally was, a simple sensation. Such a feeling is properly what we call a sensation, because it is produced by sensible means, and sensible causes acting upon the soul, which is always passive with regard to its sensations. It is different, however, when the soul, instead of wishing to banish a sensation, cherishes, indulges, and loves to retain it. In this case, the continuation of its existence must not be traced to sensible agency, but to an act of the soul itself. Here the soul is not, as in the former case, passive, and merely yielding to sensations which it cannot resist ; but it is in every respect, active, and it is to its activity, to its embracing, cherishing, and retaining the sensation, that we must trace its continuance. Such continued



sensations as these lose their character of sensations, as they are not solely caused by sensible agency, but are properly termed passions, because they are produced by the souls being moved by the original sensations which led to their production, by its coming forward, as it were, to embrace them, acknowledging that they are pleasing and agreeable to it, cherishing and retaining them, and thus perpetuating their existence by its own free will and pleasure. It is obvious that the soul is accessory to these kind of feelings, because they would perish of themselves if it remained dormant, and consequently that they should be distinguished from those feelings in which the soul has no part, which it pronounces to be foreign to its nature, which press upon it without its consent, which are produced by external agency, and which would immediately perish if their existence depended upon any voluntary act of its own. These latter feelings are, in the strictest sense of the term, sensations, because they are the effect of sensible agency, the soul having no share in them whatever; but the former feelings owe their existence to the soul itself, or if the senses have a share in their production, it must at least be allowed that the soul has a share in them also, and consequently that feelings emanating from the agency of the spiritual and material parts of our nature, must be clearly distinct from those in which the spiritual part is

entirely passive. That they are so is evident, not only for the reasons which I have just assigned, but also because we feel them to be different in their nature and character. Nothing can be more different from the feelings of which a lover is conscious, than those which he first experienced when he beheld the object of his affections. The feelings in both instances, it is true, are of an agreeable nature, but the first impressions, were mere sensations, and, as such, he felt them as something that formed no part of his existence; something that affected him, at the moment, and of which he expected to be unconscious soon after. But our emotions and passions are our very selves. The soul is so completely engrossed by them, that it has no other consciousness at the time, whereas it may feel different *sensations*, at the same moment, all of which it feels to be different from each other, and from itself; but it so completely identifies itself with its passions, that when any of them takes complete possession of it, it seems to exist in this passion alone, and to have no other existence. At such a moment the soul may be pronounced a modification of passion. It is true, a man's breast may be swayed by different passions at the same moment, and fluctuate between them, uncertain which to abandon himself to, but when he once determines, he resigns himself entirely to the passion that happens to prevail.

Hence different Passions more or less inflame,  
As strong or weak the organs of the frame,  
And hence one master-passion in the breast,  
Like Aaron's serpent, swallows up the rest.

It is different with our sensations ;—we never fluctuate between them for an instant, because we never intend to identify ourselves with them at all. They are not creations of our own : we look upon them as something external,—something which we feel at the moment, whether willingly or not ; but in all cases we distinguish between the power that feels, and the thing felt, that is, between ourselves and our sensations ; whereas we identify ourselves so completely with our passions, that we do not feel them as mere impressions made upon the soul, as something external which presses upon us, but which are not ourselves. On the contrary, passion pervades the entire soul, so that the soul and the passion seem to have but one existence. The soul, then, is passive with regard to its sensations, and, consequently, they may be pleasant or painful, whether the soul wills it or not. It is obvious, at the same time, that if they be painful, the soul can never will their continuance ; and therefore, if they continue, they must always remain sensations, that is, impressions made upon the soul, against its own consent, by external agency. As all painful feelings, then, must be sensations, it is obvious that our emotions and passions must be

all, without exception, of a pleasing character. That we may, at no time, mistake sensations for emotions, it will be necessary to bear in mind, that sensations arise from sensible agency, acting upon the soul, and that emotions and passions arise from an act of the soul itself, by which it not merely suffers the impressions made upon it, but actually embraces and retains them, as affections congenial to its own nature.

If an impression made upon the soul without its own consent, constituted an emotion, we could not possibly distinguish between emotions and sensations ; for a sensation, in the most rigid and metaphysical acceptation of the term, is an impression made from without, independently of any act, or concurrence of the soul. Besides, if such impressions were emotions, we should experience emotions every moment of our lives, as we are every moment acted upon by external influences. The term emotion, therefore, expresses not an impression made upon the senses, but an act of the soul, by which it embraces the gratifications which the senses afford. While the soul, or will, refuses to yield to the solicitations of the senses, or to partake in the enjoyments which they promise, there can be neither emotion nor passion, because the soul stands cool, firm, and collected in its place, and asserts its sovereignty over the inferior part of its nature.

To place this doctrine in a clearer light, let us try the experiment on a pleasing and on a disagreeable object. We shall suppose the first to be a beautiful woman, to whom we shall introduce three gentlemen. It is obvious that each must be pleased with her, because beauty is universally pleasing. This pleasure, however, is merely an agreeable sensation, and it will remain so, till the soul, or will, begins to act,—till it falls in love with the sensation, feels an unwillingness to resign it, and yields to this unwillingness. A lover is virtually as much in love with his passion, as with the object of his affection ; for it is his attachment to this passion that makes him continue to be in love. If he could once prevail upon himself to abandon it, he would care nothing for the person by whom it was excited. Let us suppose then, the effect of the impression made upon these three individuals by this beautiful woman to be as follows. One continues to look upon, and to think of her when absent, with a degree of pleasure which is always the same, or at least in which he can perceive no sensible change. Another views her, and thinks of her with increasing pleasure ; and, instead of checking this pleasure, he seeks to cherish and retain it. The third feels also, a disposition to an increasing pleasure in her society, but he does not suffer this pleasure to lay the least restraint on the freedom of his will ; or, to speak

perhaps more philosophically, whenever he consults his will, and asks it, whether this pleasure might not be suffered to go farther, the will instantly says no, and extinguishes, in its bud, the emotion which would immediately follow, if the will had said yes. It is obvious, then, that the last man escapes all the emotions and passions that would unavoidably follow, if the will once consented, and that, accordingly, the impressions she makes upon him, are entirely confined to those feelings and impressions, which belong to the sensitive part of his nature, and over which the will can exercise no possible controul. When I perceive a serpent, I instantaneously feel a painful sensation, which no power of the will can prevent, in the first instance. This, however, is a mere affection of the senses, and not of the will; for the will, so far from yielding to it, endeavours to get rid of it as quick as possible. He, therefore, who subjects his feelings to the dominion of the will, is incapable of any passion arising from his acquaintance with the female in question, because the will suppresses all the incipient emotions which solicit its acquiescence. Neither can he, who continues to look upon, and to think of her with a degree of pleasure which is always the same, feel the least emotion, either in or out of her presence; for that pleasure which is subject to no fluctuation, is not the effect of emotion, or passion, but a mere agreeable

sensation. All emotions and passions are subject to fluctuation, and they rise or fall, in proportion as the will yields to, or opposes their restless cravings, and unsatisfied appetites. While the will chooses to curb their rebellious solicitations, they can never rise above a sensitive nature. Even in this state, it is true, they may be very strong, and very importunate; but however strong they may be, they continue to be sensations, till they succeed in seducing the will. The moment the will gives consent, they lose the character of sensations, and become emotions or passions, in proportion as the will consents to them. The objects of emotions have seldom any thing criminal in their nature, and hence it is, that the will yields to them without the least hesitation, at the first impulse. A passion is not always so pure, though it is, at all times, more powerful; for not only the will yields to the original sensations, but yields to them so implicitly, that it co-operates with them in attaining the enjoyment of their desires. This co-operation sets them in a flame, which is occasionally checked by a return of the will to some sense of its duty. Having once yielded, however, the senses, in general, prove too powerful for it, and seldom fail in succeeding to drag it back again to an acquiescence with their excitements. Again, the will perceives the slavery to which it has subjected itself, and, if originally imbued with a strong sense of vir-

tue, invariably attempts to recover its lost ascendancy over the inferior part of its nature. Hence, a perpetual fluctuation takes place in all our passions, which are seldom felt in our emotions, because, having nothing criminal in view, the will yields to them without hesitation, and indulges in the more moderate, but more virtuous gratifications which their proper objects afford. Thus, when we perceive a distressed object, we instantly feel an emotion of pity, because there being nothing criminal in yielding to it, the will assents to the emotion at once.

This proves, that the will, in its original nature, is virtuously inclined, for it yields, without hesitation, to every pleasure of a virtuous nature; but opposes, more or less, every gratification which tends to withdraw it from the paths of rectitude. If, therefore, our passions be subject to a perpetual fluctuation, it is obvious that he who always looks upon this beautiful female with the same degree of pleasure, has never yielded to a passion for her. Here, then, we have a pleasing object, a beautiful female, who pleases two men, and yet we find they can both look upon this pleasing object without the least passion. The one is simply pleased, but as he seeks for no higher pleasure, the will is not solicited to pursue higher gratifications; the other is equally pleased, but he feels his pleasure increasing, and a disposition to yield to this increas-



ing pleasure, yet he feels no passion, because the will refuses to consent. The most beautiful object, then, can excite no passion without the consent of the will. The third alone becomes the slave of passion, because the will yields to, and co-operates with, the eagerness and ardour of his desires.

Without the consent of the will, there can, therefore, be no passion. Hence, in all our passions, the soul suffers itself to be led captive, and co-operates with the senses in seeking to enjoy the object of their desires. This slavery of the soul is properly called passion, from *passio*, suffering, because the soul, or will, suffers itself to be led captive. It is evident, however, it would not do so, if it were not pleased with its captivity, for it frequently throws off the magic yoke of the senses, and asserts its native dominion over them, even when they afford the highest enjoyment. Sensation and passion, therefore, differ in this, that the former has no object in view, no other gratification to seek, than the sensation of the moment, while the latter, not content with this immediate gratification, seeks for a higher pleasure in the enjoyment of its object. When we feel a pleasing sensation, we enjoy it without attending to the cause by which it is produced. But when this sensation is converted into a passion, it has its eye always fixed on the attainment of the object by which it is excited. A miser not only feels a plea-

sure, like all other men, in the possession of wealth, but he has also his mind invariably fixed upon the ideas of its accumulation. The first pleasure is a simple sensation, produced by an immediate, sensible cause; namely, the wealth he possesses; but the second pleasure is a passion which can be traced to no immediate, sensible cause whatever, and arises solely from the mind itself; for the idea of accumulating wealth, by which it is produced, is not a thing that has its existence without us. So far from being any thing in nature, it is not even the quality of any thing in nature, except of the mind itself. All ideas, it is true, are properties of the mind; but so far as regards their origin, they are sensible or abstract ideas, that is, ideas produced by sensible causes, or ideas produced again by these sensible ideas. There is not a passion that has ever kindled in the human frame but what has originated from this last tribe of ideas. In the instance before us, it is obvious, that the pleasure arising from the actual possession of wealth, is a feeling produced by a natural, sensible cause; namely, the wealth possessed; and consequently this feeling is properly a sensation; and it is equally obvious, that the pleasure arising from the idea of increasing this wealth cannot be attributed to the wealth itself, in any stage of its increase, for if, from any circumstance whatever, a miser discovers the actual impossibility of adding another

shilling to his hoard, all the pleasure he had hitherto enjoyed is at an end, a proof, that the pleasure arose, not from the wealth he possessed, but from a pure abstract idea of the mind: it arose not from accumulated wealth, for no fixed accumulation can satisfy a miser, or put an end to the passion; but it arose altogether from the idea of adding new heaps to what he possessed already. These new heaps, however, have as yet no existence, except in the mind of the miser; and, consequently, the idea which they create, and the pleasure which they impart, can be traced to the operations of the mind alone.

If we examine all the other passions, this theory will be found invariably true. The pleasure which a lover feels in gazing on his mistress, is a simple sensation of which his mistress is the cause; but the still greater pleasure he anticipates from being united to her, and the enjoyments that are to succeed this union, arises entirely from the creations of his own mind, and can be traced to no immediate sensible cause. His union with her cannot be considered the cause of this pleasure, for this would be to make the effect precede the cause, as his union with her does not as yet exist; and what has no actual existence can exist only in the mind. The enjoyments that follow this union cannot be the cause, for these enjoyments have no more actual existence than the union. The second pleasure,

then, can be traced to no cause whatever, but the operations and creations of an ardent and glowing imagination; and it is this pleasure that properly constitutes the passion of love.

These observations apply to all passions whatever, and point out a distinction between emotions and passions which has never been made by any writer. Hence it is, that the theory of sensations, emotions, and passions, are so confused and mystified by ethic writers. The distinction, however, having been once made, it is easy to perceive, that as all passions originate from the mind, all passions must necessarily be pleasing to it, for if they were not so, the mind would find it impossible to perpetuate their existence. Every passion, then, is pleasing to him by whom it is felt. The lover would not remain long in love if the enjoyments which he anticipates gave him no pleasure; nor would the miser continue to be swayed by avarice, if he felt no delight in it. The same may be said of all our passions, without exception, even the most despicable of them. Hatred is pleasing to him by whom it is felt, for if it were not, he neither could, nor would indulge in it. If he found no pleasure in hating a person, he would neither begin to hate him, nor continue to do so, after he had begun. It is the same with malignity. If a malignant person found greater pleasure in benevolence than in

malignity, he could not possibly be malignant, because the mind is always turning to that which is most pleasing to it, and keeping at a distance, or endeavouring to forget, what is disagreeable to it. If envy, then, were disagreeable, it could find no habitation in the mind of the person by whom it is cherished.

But it will be said, that the passions of fear and despair, prove, contrary to what I have advanced, that some passions are not pleasing to us, as no man would cherish and retain the impressions of fear and despair, if he could divest himself of them. Let us examine this objection.

I have already shewn, that passion arises from pure mental acts, or creations of the mind, which it seeks to realize, but which it knows has no present existence. The lover knows that the anticipated pleasure which produces his passion has not as yet come into existence, but the hope that they may, serves to give energy and ardour to his flame. If, however, he should begin to despair of success, he has still some little spark of hope remaining, and his attachment to the possible pleasure which this hope anticipates, makes him cling to it to the last. Small as this spark may be, it affords him greater pleasure than any other earthly enjoyment, so that it is this pleasure that attaches him to despair. Let him only succeed in disregarding what this de-

lusive hope promises him, and there is an end to his despair: like an enchanted castle, it dissolves into airy nothing.

This argument, however, may be thought not to apply, where despair admits of no hope whatever, as where the beloved object is carried away by an untimely death. In such a case, I admit there is no hope, but neither is there any despair, for despair, always supposes the existence of something to be despaired of. Here, however, the object despaired of is no more. If any passion, then, survives despair, it must be grief. The lover now becomes attached to the memory of his fair one, and this memory is dearer to him, and consequently gives him greater pleasure, than any enjoyment by which it can be displaced. If he could prevail on himself to think lightly of her memory, his grief would, as in the former case, pass away like a vision of the night. Despair not only implies something to be despaired of, but also a something to which we are strongly attached ; for no man can be said to despair of a thing which gives him no concern ; and with regard to which he is perfectly indifferent ; for whether despair be an emotion, or passion, it cannot be excited by the influence of an indifferent object ; and if it be neither an emotion nor passion, any observation relative to it can form no objection to my theory, as it applies to emotions and passions alone. Despair, then, considered as a passion,

must be caused by something to which we are strongly attached, and this attachment is dearer to us, which is saying, in other words, that it gives us greater pleasure, than any other enjoyment by which it can be displaced.

As to fear, it is erroneously considered a passion. There is no passion whatever which has not hope and fear as its inseparable attendants, namely, the hope of enjoying, and the fear of losing the enjoyment of the pleasure by which the passion is excited. Fear, then, is always the accompaniment of a passion, but never a passion itself, for whenever it is not the accompaniment of a passion, such as the fear produced by the presence of some dangerous object, a tiger, or a lion, it is a pure and unmixed sensation, as all impressions made upon the senses by external objects, or circumstances, are without exception. Fear, it is true, is frequently produced by imaginary causes, but this can never happen but when these causes appear to be real, and then, consequently, they act upon us as the realities of life. A painted tiger will terrify if it be mistaken for a real one. It is different in passion, for though, like fear, it is the offspring of the imagination, yet we know, that the gratification which it seeks after, and by which it is produced, has, during the continuance of the passion, no real existence. This is so true, that the moment the gratification is realized, the passion ceases, and dwindles into a

mere sensation. When the lover enjoys his mistress, his passion is at an end, because imagination has nothing to add to the pleasurable sensations which he feels at the moment. He anticipates no higher bliss, because he now actually enjoys all that he had anticipated, and feeling himself incapable of higher enjoyment, imagination can no longer delude him with promises of higher bliss. The feelings of the moment, then, are pure and unmixed sensations, produced by the actual object which he enjoys, so that when passion is gratified, it terminates in sensation.

It may seem strange to maintain, that avarice and malice are pleasing passions; but the assertion is not more strange than it is true; avarice and malice are pleasing to those by whom they are felt, and with regard to others, they have no existence. The passion of avarice, for instance, can never be felt by a man of a generous and liberal disposition. If, therefore, it should be argued, that avarice is a passion in which he should find no pleasure, it may also be replied, that it is a passion which he can never feel. If all men, consequently, were generous and liberal, the passion of avarice would not be known even by name, and so far from producing pleasure, or pain, we could not form an abstract idea of its existence. The moment, therefore, we begin to feel the passion of avarice, that moment also we begin to be pleased



with it, because he to whom it is not pleasing, can never feel it at all. From the moment the mind begins to dwell on the happiness of hoarding up wealth, we are seized with the passion of avarice ; but antecedent to the pleasure resulting from this idea, the passion of avarice can have no existence.

What I have said of avarice and its pleasures, is applicable to the basest and most malignant passions of our nature, as envy, malice, sloth, gluttony, misanthropy, &c. They are all pleasing to those by whom they are cherished and indulged, and to whose dispositions they are natural ; but in those to whose natures they are repugnant, they excite no passion whatever. This is so certain, that if a man whose aversion for any passion was so great, that he could not even endure a person whom he saw subject to its dominion, should, by any co-operation of circumstances, yield to the same passion himself, he would become as attached to it as the man whom it formerly rendered the object of his disgust. There is no alternative, then, between resisting a passion, and becoming attached to it ; and this attachment is a proof that we are pleased with it at the same time. The lover acknowledges that he is a prey to the most agonizing and heart-rending torments ; and, in some instances, he terminates his existence, to put an end to his sufferings. Yet, nothing can be more certain, than that the more desperately we are in

love, the more unwilling do we feel to tear ourselves from its grasp. We could not feel this unwillingness, however, without being pleased with the passion, notwithstanding all its torments, for no man is unwilling to part with what gives him no pleasure. We find pleasure, then, in the most tormenting passions, when once we suffer them to take possession of our heart. While the will repels their influence, and yields not to their dominion, they afford us no pleasure, and accordingly we find many who derive no pleasure from Tragic representations, such as stoics, who repel the influence of all sensations ; philosophers, who view every thing through the medium of the understanding ; misers, and all others who are devoured up by one predominant passion, which extinguishes all the rest.

In maintaining that avarice, malice, &c. excite no emotions in those to whose natures they are repugnant, I mean, merely, that they excite none of an avaricious or malicious nature. That they excite other passions in us, I am willing to admit, but these, like all our passions, are of a pleasing character. When I behold a malicious man plotting how he may injure another, I am immediately fired with indignation against him. The passion which I feel, though it has nothing malicious in it, is still the effect of malice, as it is entirely caused by the malicious designs of which I become a

spectator. This passion, however, is pleasing to me, for I am pleased with myself in yielding to a glow of honest indignation, and I should despise myself if I did not feel it. I could not feel it, however, if it were not pleasing and agreeable to my nature, for a malicious person, placed in my situation, could no more feel as I feel, than a tiger can like a lamb. Such a person finds a pleasure, not in opposing, but in co-operating with the designs of malice; and consequently he can never feel that glow of indignation which kindles in the breast of an honest man, the moment he perceives them.

It is so difficult, however, to make man resign any opinion or belief which he has been always accustomed to entertain, that he will frequently cling to it after being stripped of every argument which he can urge in its defence, after being obliged to admit every proposition and deduction that has been brought forward to disprove it. I doubt not, therefore, but the doctrine which makes all emotions and passions pleasing to the soul, and admits no passion or emotion whatever to be disagreeable to it, will, notwithstanding the arguments by which I have supported it, appear to many readers extravagant and visionary. At the same time, it surely cannot be thought extravagant in me to ask why they think so. If they can assign any reason which I cannot disprove, or if they can disprove the arguments by which I

have endeavoured to support it, I shall acknowledge myself in error, but to be condemned without reason is not to be condemned at all, for such a condemnation only exculpates the criminal and criminales the judge. If my theory be erroneous, I should feel the most unfeigned pleasure in seeing it refuted, as the discovery of truth is the only object at which I aim, and at which all men should aim; for if knowledge be power, error must necessarily be weakness; but as I believe it cannot be refuted, I wish to avoid as much as possible, provoking any answer. I shall therefore, state and reply to the only objections which, in my opinion can be made to it. These objections are two. The first that *even admitting every passion to possess more or less of pleasure, yet there is a clear distinction between those passions which are entirely pleasing, and those which are mixed with a great portion of pain, and that consequently the latter should be termed painful, or disagreeable passions, and not classed with the former.* To this objection I reply by admitting, very readily, there is a difference between unqualified pleasure and that which is mixed with pain, but there is also a difference betwixt snow and paper, and yet both are white, for no man will maintain that paper is not white, simply because it is not as white as snow. It is then as absurd to maintain that passions mixed with painful feelings ought to be called painful or disagreeable passions,

as to maintain that a white colour mixed with any of the darker shades, ought to be called not a white but a dark colour. Every thing is called white in which the white colour predominates, but when any other predominates, it loses the name of white and takes that of the predominating colour. By the same rule, all passions should be called pleasing, however mixed with pain, while pleasure predominates, and I have already shewn that pleasure predominates in them all. In fact, all passions without exception must be painful, if a mixture of pain be sufficient to render them so, for there is no passion exempt from it, and those passions which afford the highest raptures are those which produce the most acute and agonizing pains. Love is the strongest of all the passions :

Love, strong as death, the poet led  
To the pale nations of the dead,

and therefore it is the most delightful. Its pleasures rise to that high rapture and ecstasy which no other passion can impart, and yet what are all human pains compared to those of the lover. When Orpheus visited the pale nations of the dead in search of his fair one, (whether he visited them or not, is a matter of indifference, for we know it is only what a lover would not hesitate to do,) he knew the dangers to which he was exposing himself, and consequently he was not ignorant of the pains which he was likely to endure. Why then expose

himself to them if the pleasure of regaining his Eurydice was not greater than all the pains which hell was able to inflict? Some shallow reasoners and frigid philosophers inform us, and I have never seen the assertion disputed, that intense pain is more painful than intense pleasure is pleasing, but the assertion is disproved by constant experience. A school-boy will run after his favourite pleasure though he is certain he can only enjoy it at the expense of a flogging; the lover smiles at the perils which oppose his wishes, and braves even death itself in all its horrifying and subduing aspects, rather than evade the grim monster by resigning his hopes, and abandoning his mistress. Pain, then, cannot terrify us in the same degree that pleasure attracts us, for we force our way through all the perils to which our passion exposes us, sooner than forfeit or abandon the object of our desires. The passions which communicate this strong and rapturous pleasure, are those which are numbered among the pleasing and agreeable passions, but, as I have just shewn, their attendant pains are infinitely greater than those which accompany passions that impart but a slight degree of pleasure. In fact, the pains which accompany the strong or rapturous passions are so intense that they frequently lead either to death or to madness. Orpheus, who braved the pains of hell itself in pursuit of his Eurydice, enjoyed, no doubt, a pleasure in

regaining her, which neither pencil can paint, nor language can describe; but did not the pain which he felt in *losing* her surpass any affliction that can result from what are called the disagreeable or painful passions?

Now under hanging mountains  
Beside the falls of fountains,  
Or where Hebrus wanders,  
Rolling in meanders,  
All alone,  
Unheard, unknown,  
He makes his moan,  
And calls her ghost  
For ever, ever, ever lost.  
Now with furies surrounded,  
Despairing, confounded,  
*He trembles, he glows*  
Amidst Rhodope's snows.

See, wild as the wind o'er the desert he flies !

Hark, Hæmus resounds with the Bacchanal's cries.

Ah see he dies !

This picture of the distresses and agonies of love are not a mere fiction of imagination so far as regards its effects, though it may be as regards Orpheus, for we have examples every day before our eyes of love terminating in death or madness. Yet amidst these afflictions, pleasure is predominant: Orpheus *glows* even when he trembles, a circumstance which is finely marked by the poet. It may, therefore, be safely laid down as a rule, that in

proportion as our passions and their accompanying pleasures are intense, in the same proportion, and neither more nor less, are the pains which result from not being permitted to enjoy them. It is idle then to talk of passions unaccompanied by pain, for no instance can be produced of a man who felt no pain in being debarred from the enjoyment of the object by which his passion was produced. Such a passion has no existence, and he who pretends to it is a hypocrite. The pains attendant on our passions can never be removed until the passion itself be extinguished. The means of extinguishing passion are gratification or repulsion. The moment the passion is gratified it ceases, no matter what the passion may be. The passions of envy, malice, hatred, &c. are as completely extinguished by gratification as those of love and friendship. The moment a person obtains all the satisfaction he wishes for, he ceases to hate. Passion is also destroyed by repulsion, or a strong determination of mind not to yield to the tyranny which it attempts to exercise over us; but while we do yield, passion is a pleasure which no intensity of pain can induce us to resign. The intensity of the pains which accompany passion can never rise so high as the intensity of the pleasure that induces us to endure them. Pleasure and pain accompany all passions; and as, in no passion can



they be extinguished without the extinction of the passion itself, neither is there any passion, in which the pleasure anticipated does not exceed the pain virtually and immediately felt.

The other objection which I anticipate by replying to it here, is, that though all passions should even be allowed to be pleasing to those by whom they are felt, yet the disagreeable passions as hatred, malice, avarice, &c. are disgusting to the rest of mankind. The miser it will be said finds pleasure in amassing wealth, but the miser and his passion are equally detestable in the eye of every liberal mind, avarice, therefore, is a disagreeable or painful passion.

This objection is more specious than the former but the argument on which it rests is a mere phantom. The passion of avarice is a mere feeling in the mind which it is unwilling to resign, but whether unwilling or not, it can create neither pleasure nor pain in him by whom it is not felt. How can a feeling that has no existence create pain? and the feeling which constitutes avarice has no existence except in the breast of the miser. Its pleasures and pains are, therefore, confined to the miser alone, and can produce no emotion in him by whom the passion is not felt. I admit, we abhor the miser and his passion; but this feeling of abhorrence is not avarice itself, but a detestation of it. If this

feeling of abhorrence be painful to us, why attribute the pain to any other cause than that which produces it, namely, a feeling of abhorrence? This feeling surely is not avarice, and consequently the pain which results from it cannot be traced to avarice, or to any thing but that simple feeling of abhorrence by which it is produced.

## CHAP. X.

*The true Source of the Pleasures derived from Tragic Representations deduced from the two preceding Chapters. The secret of giving Dramatic interest to Tragedies intended for Representation.*

It appears, from every view which we can take of our emotions and passions, for I believe I have taken the most general view of them which can be taken, that they are *all* pleasing to the soul, or, in other words, that the pleasure arising from this source, is not confined to certain emotions, or to certain passions, as is generally imagined, but that it is the effect of all emotions and passions whatever. It appears also, that all strong sensations are pleasing to us except in three instances, and that the sensations produced by scenes of tragic distress do not come within the limits of these three exceptions. Whatever, then, creates either of these affections within us, produces pleasure, and if the scenes exhibited in the representation of tragic distress, be calculated to excite them, pleasure must be the necessary consequence of witnessing such scenes. At the same time, it

must be very obvious, that the object of every scene, of every situation, in a word, of every thing presented to us on the stage, is not to teach us something of which we were already ignorant, but to excite such a strong feeling within us, as the contriver of it imagined it was calculated to excite. He knows, that, if he succeed in producing this feeling, it will necessarily please, though he does not reflect, at the same time, that any other strong feeling would please as well, provided it was in harmony with those which preceded and followed it. If then, we are so constituted by nature, as to derive pleasure from every species of agency that excites strong impressions within us, whether they be sensations, emotions, or passions, except as before excepted, and if Tragic representations be a species of agency fitted to excite such impressions, and if the impressions which it makes do not come within the limits of the three exceptions or instances in which strong sensations fail of imparting pleasure, it follows, that *the pleasures derived from Tragic representations, arise from their being a species of agency fitted to produce strong sensations, emotions, and passions, within us, and from our being so constituted by nature as to find pleasure in every affection of the mind that assumes a strong and energetic character.* Let us now see of what use this knowledge can be to the tragic poet.

In the first place, if a knowledge of the cause from which Tragic pleasure arises, were sufficient to enable him to invent his plot, create his images, dispose of his situations and characters, in such a manner as to be certain of always producing pleasure, it is very obvious, that all tragedies would prove successful, whether produced by a writer of little talent, or a writer of genius. If this were the case, I believe all my readers would wish, that the source of Tragic pleasure had never been discovered, as it would approximate the most stupid writer of tragedies to Shakspeare and Corneille. The one would please as well as the other; and while the audience were pleased, they would not refuse the stupid author of their pleasure a portion of that merit which belongs only to genius. An acquaintance, however, with the cause of Tragic pleasure, will still leave the writer of genius, and the dunce, as far removed from each other as ever, for reasons which will immediately appear. I must first, however, answer an objection which may probably be made to the propriety of tracing a cause, which, when known, is of no advantage to the tragic poet, and which, consequently, is rather curious than useful. In the first place, though a knowledge of the cause which produces Tragic pleasure will not enable the writer of tardy intellect to approach nearer to the rapid strides of genius than he can at present, yet it does not follow that it can be of

no service to him, because it may enable both him and the writer of genius to attain to a higher degree of excellence than they otherwise could have attained. But granting it, for a moment, to be entirely a question, the resolution of which tends only to gratify curiosity, is there not still something gained by becoming acquainted with it? Our ignorance of the cause of any effect, creates a certain wish of becoming acquainted with it, and a consequent anxiety until the wish be gratified. Is there not something gained by removing this anxiety, and gratifying the curiosity by which it is excited? This gratification produces pleasure, and if pleasure be of no use, why go to the theatre at all? why read the tragedies of Shakspeare or Corneille? The only advantage that can be derived from going to the theatre is the pleasure which it imparts. Indeed, the only advantage that can be derived from riches, power, knowledge, prowess, or from any other source whatever, consists in the pleasure which it imparts, or the pains which it enables us to avoid. As pleasure, or happiness, then, is the ultimate object of all our pursuits, ~~X~~ it is equally desirable, and equally useful, from whatever source it arises.

A knowledge, however, of the source of the pleasures derived from Tragic representations, will serve a higher purpose than that of gratifying curiosity alone; for he who knows that the sensa-

tions which his characters and situations shall excite in the mind of the audience will be pleasing in proportion as they are strong and affecting, will necessarily avoid, as much as possible, the error of those who more frequently appeal to the understanding than to the sympathies of men. It is said that Moliere read his plays to his old servant, Laforet, to see what impression they would make upon her, and that he generally trusted to the result of this experiment. It cannot be supposed, at the same time, that he had a high regard for her understanding, and consequently he considered feeling alone, to be the proper touchstone of dramatic criticism. It would be erroneous, however, to suppose, that he who appeals incessantly to the feelings, and who writes under a conviction that it is only by producing strong sensations, emotions, and passions, that he can succeed in communicating Tragic pleasure; it would be erroneous, I say, to suppose, that such a writer must necessarily please, because the sentiments which he puts into the mouths of his characters, and the situations in which he places them, may not always excite those feelings which he intends them to excite. It may be said, that, according to my theory, it matters little what feeling they excite, provided it be a strong one. I admit it; but it seldom happens that any situation or sentiment will produce a strong sensation, which is out of its place, and which

does not harmonize with what precedes, and also with what follows, if we be antecedently acquainted with it. Hence it follows, that the situation which produces the most powerful impression in one tragedy, might, if copied, produce no sensation at all in another; for if we perceived that it did not naturally arise from the preceding and harmonize with the subsequent train of events, this perception would strip it, in a very great degree, of the power which it possessed over the mind, in the tragedy from which it was copied. It is in the perception of this harmony, that the writer of genius triumphs over inferior intellects, nor is it possible to point out any means by which the latter can ever approach him. The reason is obvious: the eye of genius penetrates, at a glance, the whole structure which it has erected:—it perceives not only the entire of the design which it aims to accomplish, but it perceives also the relation which each individual member, circumstance, image, situation, sentiment, particular trait of character, and mode of action, in which this particular trait is apt to exert itself, bears to the general design. If, therefore, in the impetuosity of its rapid career, it should create any image, express any sentiment, invent any situation, or trait of character, which, though just in itself, has no relation to the whole assemblage of parts, it instantly detects the inappropriateness of its own



creation: it perceives that though the sentiment which it expresses is true, it is still a sentiment which has no accordance with the purpose for which it was intended.

*Sed nunc non erat his locus.*

It is not so much the business of the tragic writer to express what is true, as to express truths that belong or may belong to the immediate circumstances from which they arise. He who says that two and two make four, that two right lines cannot inclose a space, says what cannot be contested; but if he introduce this saying without necessity, if it have no pertinence to the circumstance from which it is supposed to arise, he is only laughed at for his pains. We naturally say to him, it is very true that two and two make four,—that two right lines do not inclose a space, but why make use of the observation? what have these truths to do with the subject in question? The writer of genius, I say, perceives the absurdity of saying what is true, of inventing a situation which is affecting in its own nature, if they do not arise naturally from the preceding circumstance, or the general tenor, or ultimate tendency of the whole design. Here, unhappily, the writer of slow intellect, who possesses neither delicacy of taste, nor quickness of discrimination, completely loses himself. He imagines relations where there is no relation, and creates discord where all is harmony in his opinion.

It is of little importance for such a writer to know, that strong sensations, emotions, and passions, are all pleasing to the soul, and that the pleasures arising from Tragic representations, are all owing to the agency by which these affections of our nature are produced. It may serve him so far as to perceive that his object should be to produce those affections; but if he cannot perceive how far one sentiment or situation agrees with another, he will bring forward the most affecting situations under the greatest disadvantages.

The only advantage he can derive from becoming acquainted with the source of Tragic pleasure, is, that it will induce him to address himself exclusively to the sensitive nature of man. And in doing so, he will, no doubt, succeed better than a writer of greater talent, who imagines that he can only succeed by creating a perfect harmony between all the members which compose his work, and therefore attends more to this harmony than to the nature of the elements which he harmonizes with each other. Without harmony of parts, or, at least, an appearance of harmony, there can, it is true, be no Tragic pleasure; but mere harmony is of little use, if the things harmonizing with each other be not originally fitted to produce strong sensations. This is best proved by examples. I shall first quote passages, which, though beautiful in themselves, lose their effect through want of

harmony, or, in other words, because they do not arise naturally from the circumstances from which they are made to arise. The following passage is beautiful in itself, but, as it is supposed to arise from extreme grief, it has little effect upon us, because we know that real and undisguised grief would express itself with less art and study.

*Almeria.* O no ! Time gives increase to my afflictions.  
 The circling hours, that gather all the woes  
 Which are diffus'd through the revolving year,  
 Come heavy laden with th' oppressive weight  
 To me ; with me, successively, they leave  
 The sighs, the tears, the groans, the restless cares,  
 And all the damps of grief that did retard their flight :  
 They shake their downy wings, and scatter all  
 The dire collected dews on my poor head,  
 Then fly with joy and swiftness from me.

*Mourning Bride, Act I, Scene I.*

It is difficult to meet with any thing more beautiful than the following passage in Pope's *Elegy to the Memory of an unfortunate Lady*, and yet we cannot endure it, because it is not the effusion of real feeling, though it affects to be so. "It is not," says Lord Kaimes, very justly, "the language of the heart, but of the imagination, indulging its flights at ease, and by that means, is *eminently discordant* with the subject."

What though no weeping loves thy ashes grace,  
 Nor polish'd marble emulate thy face ?

What, though no sacred earth allow thee room,  
Nor hallow'd dirge be mutter'd o'er thy tomb ;—  
Yet shall thy grave with rising flowers be drest,  
And the green turf lie lightly on thy breast :  
There shall the morn her earliest tears bestow,  
There the first roses of the year shall blow ;  
While angels with their silver wings o'ershade  
The ground, now sacred by thy reliques made.

The following passage from the last act of the *Careless Husband* is natural and affecting in itself, but when we reflect that it does not harmonize with the general manners and language of Lady Easy, or the characteristic mildness of her character, the effect is lost upon us. We should instantly sympathize with the joy which it expresses, if it came from a person capable of feeling such exquisite raptures.

*Lady Easy.* O the soft treasure ! O the dear reward of long-desiring love.—Thus ! thus to have you mine, is something more than happiness ; 'tis double life, and madness of abounding joy.

We see, then, that passages which are beautiful in themselves, lose a great portion of their effect upon the mind, when they do not harmonize with the whole assemblage of parts with which they are connected, and particularly with the immediate circumstances from which they arise. But even want of harmony is more tolerable than insipidity, though it be all of a piece, simply because insipidity, however consistent it may be with the entire

of the parts to which it is united, can never rouse the mind to life and energy, can never excite those stronger feelings without which pleasure can have no existence. We are frequently pleased, in spite of us, with a passage which has neither harmony in itself, nor with any thing else, and which is even, in some degree, unintelligible, if it contain some grand and striking images, which lift the soul above itself, and waft it, it knows not where, and it "cares not wherefore." The following passage is quoted by an eminent critic, as an instance of pure rant and extravagance; and yet the images are so grand and imposing in themselves, that though Lucan has carried his extravagance too far in the principal idea, we cannot help feeling a certain glow of pleasure in dwelling on the splendour of the scene presented to us. This pleasure, it is true, would be greater if there were more consistency; but though this inconsistency lessens, it cannot entirely extinguish the sublime emotion.

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Romanum nomen, et omne

Imperium magno est tumuli modus. Obrue Saxa  
 Crimine plena deum. Si tota est Herculis Oete,  
 Et Juga tota vacant Bromio Nyseia; quare  
 Unus in Egypto magno lapis? Omnia Lagi  
 Rura tenere potest, si nullo cespite nomen  
 Hæserit. Erremus populi, cinerumque tuorum,  
 Magne metu nullas Nili calcemus arenas.—L. viii. l. 798.

Where there are seas, or air, or earth, or skies,  
 Where'er Rome's empire stretches, Pompey lies.

Far be the vile memorial then convey'd !  
 Nor let this stone the partial gods upbraid.  
 Shall Hercules all Oeta's heights demand,  
 And Nysa's hill for Bacchus only stand ;  
 While one poor pebble is the warrior's doom,  
 That fought the cause of Liberty and Rome ?  
 If Fate decrees he must in Egypt lie,  
 Let the whole fertile realm his grave supply  
 Yield the wide country to his awful shade,  
 Nor let us dare on any part to tread,  
 Fearful we violate the mighty dead. }

In fact, so powerfully are we swayed by what-ever excites a deep and powerful sensation in us, that we forget the greatest extravagance of expression when it arises from extreme and violent passion, but then extreme passion makes us only ridicule the person in whom it is exhibited, if we perceive no sufficient cause for it, because we suspect it is all a trick. In the following passage from the *Phædra* of Racine, the earth, the ocean, and the very heavens are horror-struck at the *monstre sauvage* of the poet, and yet we excuse the boldness of the picture, because we perceive that the exaggeration of *Theramene* is suggested by his own fears.

Le ciel avec horreur voit ce monstre sauvage ;  
 La terre s'en émeut, l'air en est infecté,  
 Le flot qui l'apporta recule épouvanté !

Insipidity, on the contrary, or any scene or description not fitted to excite strong sensations, will fail of imparting pleasure, however well adapted

it may be to its place. Hence it is, that Shakespeare seldom affects us where he has no opportunity of exciting passion or emotion, or where he purposely strays into reasoning and observation. How lifeless and uninteresting is the following passage from Hamlet.

They clepe us drunkards, and with swinish phrase  
Soil our addition ; and indeed it takes  
From our achievements, though performed at height,  
The pith and marrow of our attribute.  
So oft it chanceth in particular men,  
That for some vicious mole of Nature in them,  
As, in their birth, (wherein they are not guilty,  
Since Nature cannot choose his origin,)  
By the o'ergrowth of some complexion,  
Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason ;  
Or by some habit, that too much o'erleavens  
The form of plausible manners ; that these men,  
Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect,  
(Being Nature's livery, or Fortune's scar,)  
Their virtues else, be they as pure as grace,  
As infinite as man may undergo,  
Shall in the general censure take corruption,  
From that particular fault. Act I, Scene 7.

Racine had a fine opportunity, in the following soliloquy, of describing the tumults, anxieties, and distracting cares, excited in the breast of a lover who had been obliged to conceal his passion for several years, and consequently of exciting that corresponding sympathy in the audience that would have yielded them the highest degree of Tragic

pleasure. He has not done so, however, and consequently we read or hear it spoken with perfect indifference, on account of its tameness, its cold, phlegmatic reasoning, where all should be the expression of strong and violent feeling, and its consequent unfitness to excite in us those sensations, or feelings, in the absence of which Tragedy must always fail of imparting pleasure :

Hé bien ! Antiochus, es tu toujours le même ?  
 Pourrai je, sans trembler, lui dire, je vous aime ?  
 Mais quoi ! déjà je tremble ; et mon cœur agité  
 Craint autant ce moment que je l'ai souhaité.  
 Bérénice autrefois m'ôta toute espérance.  
 Elle m'imposa même un éternel silence.  
 Je me suis tu cinq ans ; et, jusques à ce jour,  
 D'un voile d'amitié j'ai couvert mon amour.  
 Dois-je croire qu'au rang où Titus la destine  
 Elle m'écoute mieux que dans la Palestine ?  
 Il l'épouse. Ai-je donc, attendu ce moment,  
 Pour me venir encore déclarer son amant ?  
 Quel fruit me reviendra d'un aveu téméraire ?  
 Ah ! puis qu'il faut partir, partons sans lui déplaire.  
 Retirons-nous, sortons ; et, sans nous découvrir,  
 Allons loin de ses yeux l'oublier, ou mourir.  
 Hé quoi ! souffrir toujours un tourment quelle ignore !  
 Toujours verser des pleurs qu'il faut que je devore !  
 Quoi ! même en la perdant redouter son courroux !  
 Belle reine, et pourquoi vous offenseriez-vous ?  
 Biens-je vous demander que vous quittiez l'empire ?  
 Que vous m'aimiez ? Hélas ! je ne viens que vous dire  
 Qu'après m'être long temps flatté que mon rival  
 Trouveroit à ses vœux quelque obstacle fatal.



Aujourd' hui qu'il peut tout, que votre hymen s'avance,  
 Exemple infortuné d'une longue constance,  
 Après cinq ans d'amour, et d'espoir superflus,  
 Je pars, fidèle encore, quand je n'espère plus.  
 Au lieu de s'offenser, elle pourra me plaindre.  
 Quoi qu'il en soit, parlons ; c'est assez nous contraindre.  
 Et que peut craindre, hélas ! un amant sans espoir,  
 Qui peut bien se résoudre à ne la jam'ais voir ?

*Berenice, Acte I, Scene 2.*

In the two following passages, Shakspeare had an equal opportunity of describing the influence of grief over the mind, and consequently of exciting in us those corresponding sympathies, which, as in the former case, would strongly affect us. He has failed, however, like Racine, and is far below him in dignity. Whenever Shakspeare sinks, he sinks to the earth, whenever he rises, he out-tops the heavens. If Racine does not always keep in the midway, at least he never rises so high, or sinks so low.

*Queen.* Ah my poor princes ! ah my tender babes !  
 My unblown flow'rs, new-appearing sweets !  
 If yet your gentle souls fly in the air,  
 And be not fixed in doom perpetual,  
 Hover about me with your airy wings,  
 And hear your mother's lamentation.

*Richard III.* Act IV, Scene 4.

*King Philip.* You are as fond of grief as of your child.

*Constance.* Grief fills the room up of my absent child ;  
 Lies in his bed, walks up and down with me,  
 Puts on his pretty looks, repeats his words,

Remembers me of all his gracious parts,  
 Stuffs out his vacant garment with his form ;  
 Then have I reason to be fond of grief.

*King John*, Act III, Scene 6.

It is obvious, then, that nothing will please in Tragedy, but what produces a strong sensation ; and, consequently, no vastness of conception, accuracy of description, felicity of expression, perfection of method, in a word, no exuberance of idea, or rapidity of genius, will ever produce a tragedy fit for representation, unless it teem with scenes, images, sentiments, and situations, which are fitted to produce strong sensations in the audience. The writer of slow intellect who presents us with such scenes and situations will please infinitely more, however discordantly he may have connected them together, than a writer of the brightest genius, who displays all his art in the production of sentiments which, while they require not only great industry, but great discrimination of idea to arrive at them, serve only to puzzle the understanding, instead of affecting the sensitive part of our nature. He may produce a tragedy that proves him a man of genius, but yet he may shew himself totally ignorant of the human heart, and particularly of the source of those pleasures which he seeks to produce. Addison's *Cato* sufficiently evinces the genius of its author, and yet its want of success proves, that Addison was ignorant of

the secret of producing Tragic pleasure, which is merely saying, that he knew not that this pleasure arises from the creation of such images, circumstances, and situations as strongly affect the sensitive part of our nature, and that a mere appeal to the understanding is totally barren of delight. The advantage which the Tragic writer derives from knowing the true source of Tragic pleasure is, therefore, very obvious; and, consequently, the utility of the inquiry which forms the subject of the present work. It is true, that a writer of the most ordinary talent, the moment he perceives the true source of Tragic pleasure, may avoid the errors of those who have been ignorant of it, as well as the writer of genius; but though both keep equally clear from this rock, the writer of limited views is continually striking against others, while the former, having once ascertained the point for which he is bound, ventures boldly into the great ocean, perceives at a distance the rocks in which the other is entangled, sails round them, and enters triumphantly into the haven for which he is bound. But, though the writer of genius retains always his superiority over the Baviad tribe, it is still clear, and verified by long experience, that a writer of the greatest genius will be shipwrecked in tragedy, if he mistake the true source of Tragic pleasure. The number of eminent authors who have failed in this species of writing, while they

have attained the highest eminence in others, prove, that without knowing, antecedently, whence Tragic pleasure arises, no exuberance of genius will succeed in producing a tragedy fitted for the Stage. Several living writers, of no very high character, have given us tragedies which have succeeded perhaps beyond their own expectations; while writers of much greater eminence have completely failed. From the dramatic attempts of Lord Byron and Sir Walter Scott, it is very evident they have mistaken the true source of Tragic pleasure. Neither Shakspeare himself, nor, perhaps, any other Tragic writer, could tell in what the secret of producing this pleasure consists, and, consequently, their success has arisen from having been guided instinctively into the true path by the natural impulse of their own genius. Shakspeare drew all his scenes, characters, and situations from nature: he travelled not into the ideal world in search of abstruse sentiments, or catachrestical associations: he appealed not to the understanding, but to the feelings of human nature. He was perfectly acquainted with the human heart, and the influence which is exercised upon it by external circumstances. He is full of allusions to the prejudices, the manners, the traditions, the weaknesses, and popular opinions of his age, and, consequently, wrote what came home to the feelings, and not to the intellect, of every individual. He

therefore seldom fails of producing strong sensations, though he was, in all probability, perfectly ignorant of the cause to which he owed his success, namely the excitement of strong sensations, emotions, and passions. "Shakspeare," says Dr. Johnson, "is, above all other writers, at least above all modern writers, the poet of nature, the poet that holds up to his readers a faithful mirror of manners and of life. His characters are not modified by the customs of particular places, unpractised by the rest of the world, by the particularities of studies or professions, which can operate but on small numbers, or by the accidents of transient fashions, or temporary opinions: they are the genuine progeny of common humanity, such as the world will always supply, and observation will always find. His persons always act and speak by the influence of those general passions and principles by which all minds are agitated, and the whole system of life is continued in motion."\*

It was from this close adherence to human nature that Shakspeare succeeded so admirably in awakening all those slumbering emotions and passions which lie dormant in the human breast, and which require only those kindred images, circumstances, and situations, which naturally arise from the condition of our nature, and from the rela-

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\* Preface to Shakspeare.

tions that eternally connect man to man, to rouse them into life and being. He sought not after those remote allusions which lie beyond the pale of sensitive recognition, and can be grasped only by pure intellection. Hence all his scenes, all his sentiments, even his very reasoning and philosophy, wear the genuine stamp of sensible existence. Every thing is brought home to our feelings, so that the representation is not a mere symbol, or faint image of nature. It can hardly be called a copy, for the imitation approaches so nearly to the original, that it has the same effect upon us as if it were nature itself. The impression is therefore of a strong and ardent character, and such an impression is always pleasing to us, if the theory which I have adopted on the subject be founded in truth. In Shakspeare there are no forced images : every thing arises naturally from the circumstance which produces it, and therefore every thing affects us ; first, because the image itself is clear, palpable, and distinct, such as requires no exercise of mind to comprehend it, but which every person recognizes instinctively, the moment it is presented to him ; secondly, because it is in perfect harmony with the circumstance from which it arises, and consequently loses no portion of its effect upon us ; for, as I have shewn in the above examples, wherever we perceive a want of harmony,—wherever we perceive an image, or a description, that seems to

be at variance with the circumstance from which it is made to arise, our nature revolts against it, unless it be so beautiful in its own nature, that we cannot help being pleased with it. Like a female of extraordinary beauty, but of immoral propensities, we gaze upon her with a sensation which is far from being disagreeable, though we reprove ourselves, at the same moment, for being capable of feeling it.

The images of Shakspeare, then, have this two-fold advantage, that they are, in themselves, fitted to produce strong sensations in us, and that they render these sensations still stronger by their arising naturally from the circumstance which produce them. We are pleased with them, not only on their own account, but from the satisfaction of perceiving, that they are not counterfeits. Thus it is we are pleased with a beautiful female of amiable and interesting manners, after a very short acquaintance; but this pleasure is greatly diminished, if we happen to discover that her morals are not in perfect unison with her manners and person; while, on the other hand, it is greatly increased, if we discover that her virtues and sweetness of disposition are of a still more endearing, and engaging character than her personal attractions. It is so in tragedy: a beautiful image will please, from its own native beauty, whether we meet with it in Shakspeare, or some inferior poet; but the latter

takes away from the pleasure, by placing it in a situation to which it is not adapted—by making it arise from a circumstance or sentiment with which it has no immediate relation, no relation whatever but what exists in the remote and far-fetched associations of the poet. Thus, however beautiful the image may be in itself, the poet debases it, by making it appear a perfect counterfeit, an unnatural creation, while, in Shakspeare, the pleasure which the very same image is fitted to impart by its own native beauty, or the characters, or situations with which it is associated, is greatly increased by the satisfaction of perceiving, that it is not merely beautiful, but true to nature;—that it is such an image as the circumstance from which it arises is fitted to suggest; that it is in perfect harmony with the characters and situations with which it is connected; and that no other image can be substituted in its stead, without weakening the general effect; and, consequently, without diminishing the pleasure which it imparts. The images and situations, therefore, which please us in Tragedy, are those which are not only fitted, from their own nature, abstracted from the circumstances with which they are connected, to excite strong sensations, but which, at the same time, have the appearance of arising by a kind of unavoidable necessity, from the circumstance of the moment; and which cannot be displaced by any other images,



or sentiments more natural, or better fitted to their immediate place.

By beautiful images, beautiful sentiments, beautiful situations, beautiful scenes, beautiful delineations of the heart and its affections, emotions, and passions, I mean any image, sentiment, &c. which produces a strong impression upon us, and affects us deeply, whether it be in its own nature beautiful or deformed. Nothing, it is true, will affect us as strongly when it is improperly, as when it is naturally introduced, unless the poet has the art of concealing its want of just application; but a description may be extremely natural, or, at least, appear so to us, and consequently extremely beautiful, though the object described should be extremely deformed. No one will deny, that Milton's description of Death is highly beautiful, though the portrait represents him as the most horrid of objects.

The other shape,  
If shape it might be called, that shape had none  
Distinguishable in member, joint, or limb,  
Or substance might be called, that shadow seem'd,  
For each seem'd either : black it stood as Night,  
Fierce as ten Furies, terrible as Hell,  
And shook a dreadful dart.

Whether this be, or be not, a true portrait of death, is of no importance whatever, if it be a portrait of the image we are apt to form of him

in our own minds ; and it is the perfect agreement or harmony that exists between this portrait of the grim monarch of terrors, and the image which we generally form of him ourselves, combined with the fitness of death, in its own nature, to produce strong sensations, that constitute the beauty of the description. Hence it is, that the most ordinary, and the most disagreeable objects, have been made the subjects of paintings that are highly admired. What renders the imitation of such objects, however, beautiful, is the harmony, or accordance which we perceive between them and the original, that is, the resemblance which they bear to each other. That the beauty, and, consequently, the pleasure, arises from this resemblance, is rendered evident by a very simple circumstance : it is this, that whenever the imitation is so complete, as to make it be mistaken for the original, the beauty is lost, because we can no longer perceive any resemblance whatever ; for a thing cannot resemble itself, as resemblance supposes a likeness between things which are not the same, and also supposes appearances in which they agree, and others in which they disagree. Where they disagree in all their appearances, there is no resemblance, and where they agree in all, the idea of resemblance never occurs to us. One egg cannot be called a resemblance of another, for this would be to call it a resemblance of itself. We can never admire imitations which are mistaken for their originals :

this is evident in the imitation of roses, fruit, &c. because they are capable of being imitated so perfectly, that the imitation is frequently mistaken for the original. An artificial apple creates no pleasure, because we can perceive no resemblance : we mistake it for an apple itself, and even when we detect the illusion, the original sensation still remains, because we are still unable to trace any resemblance. It still presents itself to our senses, not the imitation of an apple, but an apple itself, and, in every thing that appeals to the sensitive part of our nature, it is the correspondent emotion, or the impression which it makes, and not any deduction of the reasoning faculty, that determines our pleasure. Reason tells us to no purpose, that an artificial apple is a mere imitation ; for while it appears a real apple to our senses, we cannot help feeling that sensation which is produced by a real apple, let us reason on the difference between reality and imitation as much as we will. There is, consequently, in painting, a point beyond which the painter must not venture ; and, in mere portraits of external nature, the greatest artist is he, who can reach this point without passing over it. It is a knowledge, however, which cannot be communicated by art ; unless the painter feel it, he cannot be taught it.

*Nec majis arte traditur quam gustus aut odor.*

The entire of the pleasures imparted by the imitations of natural objects which are indifferent to

us arises, therefore, from perceiving the accuracy with which they are imitated. Pigs, dogs, sheep, shepherds, &c. are represented in some landscapes less beautiful than they are in nature: and yet, such landscapes may be finer paintings, and, consequently, more beautiful, than those in which the painter has studied to make his shepherds well-formed men, because, what we admire in such paintings, is not the beauty of the shepherd or his dogs, but the art with which they are imitated, or, in other words, the correctness of the resemblance. I am aware, that Mr. Payne Knight, while he admits them to be beautiful, attributes their being so, not to any resemblance which they bear to their originals, but to the omission of such qualities as are disagreeable in the original, and the selection only of such as are pleasing. But, when we consider, that the representation of an old man, bending with age and infirmities, will be pronounced by every person, a more beautiful figure in a picture, when executed by a superior artist, than the figure of a beautiful, well-formed youth, when executed by an inferior hand, Mr. Knight's theory can have little claim to our attention. In the painting of such objects, I agree with Mr. Price, that "they can never produce beautiful, that is, lovely pictures ;"\* for it is obvious that

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\* Price's Dialogues.

there is nothing in the figures themselves, except when they are supposed to be influenced by some strong passion, that can interest us ; and, therefore, it is not the figures or painting, but the accuracy of the imitation, that gives us pleasure. It is, however, a pleasure of a light character, and is as different from the pleasures imparted by an historical painting, which represents deep and affecting situations, as the pleasures of comedy from that of tragedy. The characters and scenes represented in a comedy, have nothing interesting in themselves : they produce no strong impression, and are forgotten the moment they pass out of our sight ; but yet we are pleased for the time being, because we cannot help admiring the fidelity with which they represent their originals in nature. It is curious to observe, how much learning has been wasted in attempting to shew, why tragedy pleases more than comedy ; but the moment we come to perceive, that comedy pleases us merely as an imitation, not as representing things that would strongly affect us in reality, while tragedy pleases not only as an imitation, but also as representing characters, events, catastrophes, &c. which would strongly excite our sympathies, if we beheld them in real life, we have little difficulty in perceiving what all the writers on the subject have never yet perceived ; why tragedy affects us more than comedy. The representations in comedy resemble the imitation


of ordinary objects in painting. We regard not the objects, but we regard the truth and accuracy with which they are imitated. In tragedy, it is different: we regard the objects themselves, because we could not avoid regarding them in real life; and we also regard the great art which is necessary to represent them properly. Hence it happens, that in tragedy we are not satisfied with mere imitation: we seek, at the same time, to behold characters that are strongly marked, and which, consequently, produce strong sensations in us. We love to see them placed in situations which would affect us powerfully, if we met with them in real life. If, however, we place such characters and situations in the hands of an inferior writer, they will cease to interest us, because he will destroy them in the imitation. He will make emotions co-exist that cannot possibly exist together: he will disunite what ought to be united, and connect what ought to be unconnected. Instead of harmony, then, there will be a perpetual discord, however well any characters may be fitted in themselves to affect us strongly. Human nature is so constituted, particularly in men of refined feelings, that it cannot relish what is, in itself, most pleasing to it, if it be accompanied by palpable inconsistencies. We relieve a man whom we know to be suddenly reduced from a state of affluence to comparative distress, and we find a pleasure in sympa-

thizing with his misfortunes, if he endure them as a man. But this sympathy and pleasure instantly cease, if we know him to exaggerate his misfortunes, or if we see him perfectly unaffected by his sudden translation from affluence to poverty, because our own feelings tell us, that we could not endure such a change without feelings unknown to those who have always lived in the state to which we are reduced. There is something, then, in the man's conduct that clashes with our feelings, and destroys our sympathy; and this something is a want of consistency; for man is the creature of circumstances, and when we perceive a man unaffected by that influence which the situation in which he is placed ought to exercise over him, we naturally feel, whether we reason upon it or not, that there is a something inconsistent in the man's character. The Tragic writer, consequently, who cannot observe consistency of character, of manners, sentiments, &c. will perpetually offend us, even though he should place situations before us that are strongly affecting in themselves. Men of a sanguine and ardent temperament, however, will enjoy these situations, notwithstanding the inconsistencies which accompany them, for they are so strongly affected by the feelings of the moment, that the inconsistencies escape them; or, if they be so palpable as to force themselves upon their attention, yet the disagreeable sensations which they are calcu-

lated to produce, is lost in the ardour and intensity of the stronger emotions which they excite. These inconsistencies, however, would be as disagreeable to them as to others, if they were perfectly cool at the moment they perceived them ; but the warmth of passion either throws a veil over them, or makes them appear like the lighter shades in painting. The shade that is scarcely visible in painting, from the stronger shade by which it is obscured, would appear distinct and palpable, if this stronger shade were removed. It is so with man : while he is under the dominion of passion, he has only a faint perception of things that would be glaringly manifest if he could remove the passion that throws them into shade, and gives them a sort of ideal or imaginary existence. Tragedy, then, loses a great part of its effect where there is inconsistency, or want of harmony perceived ; and yet, in tragedy, as well as in painting, there may be harmony without producing tragic pleasure. We should look upon the finest of Titian's landscapes with indifference, if the human species did not appear in it, and yet all the harmony of light, shade, colouring, perspective, &c. might be as well observed without the appearance of any figure whatever. The finest landscapes always please us less than the figures which appear in them, and the celebrated *Arcadia* of Poussin would, perhaps, never be heard of, were it not for the figures with which he has peopled it.



More, then, depends on the things harmonizing with each other, than on harmony itself; and men of sanguine temperaments, as I have just observed, are satisfied with the slightest connexion, if the things connected be pleasing in themselves, that is, if they produce strong sensations. Situations that are not fitted to produce strong sensations will please no person, however harmoniously combined, while those which are fitted to produce them, will please, even in the midst of inconsistencies, men of an ardent temperament, or any man who has once yielded to the sensations which they are fitted to produce, so that strong sensations and tragic pleasure will be always found to accompany each other, by whatsoever means they are excited. The monument represented in Poussin's *Arcadia*, enclosing the remains of a young female, a circumstance which is made known by the statue placed upon the tomb, after the manner of the ancients, and the four young children who happen to meet it unexpectedly in this smiling country, where pleasure and festivity were only sought after, and only anticipated, produces a stronger sensation in the mind, and, consequently, imparts more pleasure, than all the smiling and romantic objects which the painter has scattered over this Elysian scene. If it be asked why the representation of this event affects us so strongly, I reply, because it would affect us in real life, be-



cause we could not pass by such a tomb, and read such an inscription, where all was joy and pleasure, and festivity around, without shedding a silent tear, or, at least, (supposing our natures too stubborn and untractable to yield to so soft and delightful an emotion) without being moved. Such a tomb, met in a church-yard, or in a wilderness, where it stood unconnected with kindred associations, would not produce this effect. Our sympathies, then, would be weakened in the first place, by being divided between different objects; and, in the second, by being ourselves antecedently in no pleasing mood, from the dull scenery which surrounded us, for, as I have already observed, the more happy we are ourselves, the more prepared we are to sympathize in the woes of others. The unfortunate man is incapable of all those softer and milder affections which resolve themselves into sympathy. The tomb affects us, then, in painting, because it would affect us in real life. It is so in tragedy: the representation of common scenes, and common events, makes no impression upon us, but what arises, as in painting, from the exactness of the imitation, its resemblance to the original, and the consequent skill of the artist who produced so natural an imitation. We admire not the objects presented in such paintings, because they would not affect us in real life, but still we admire the skill and powers of the artist. The

pleasure, consequently, is of a light character, and can never approach the pleasure arising from paintings, which represent events and circumstances, which, in real life, would affect us strongly. In beholding these paintings, we forget entirely the artist, and are attentive only to the deep and affecting situations which are placed before us. Whenever we perceive a display of mental energy, and comprehension of idea, we are pleased, though this energy should be exercised on subjects of no interest. The style of the great Venetian painters seldom approaches closely to nature;—the expression and colouring are equally feeble, and yet their paintings have always ranked among the first productions of the art, not, obviously, because they please the mere organs of sense, not because the eye dwells upon them with pleasure, but because we perceive that they display the greatest technical skill, and the most consummate acquaintance with the science or principles of the art. They please, however, only those who are acquainted with those principles, because they address themselves to the discursive, not to the sensitive faculties. He who merely judges through the medium of his feelings, looks upon them with the utmost indifference, and yet, it is only he who is affected through the senses that can properly be said to be affected at all; and it is only the painting that addresses itself to the feelings, not to our understanding, that

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can ever produce a powerful impression. What appeals to our reason may produce a light, agreeable sensation; and he who judges exclusively by reason may feel a sensation of a similar character; but it is only what appeals to our feelings that can affect us strongly; and it is only he who judges by his feelings that can be strongly affected. It is, therefore, necessary to distinguish that light pleasure which arises from mere imitation, or from a perception of the superior skill of the artist, whether displayed in correct imitation or otherwise, from that stronger, and more impassioned feeling which arises less from the correct imitation of nature, than from the very nature of the things which are imitated. This holds equally true in poetry, music, and all imitations whatever. They please us not only as imitations or copies of nature, but also as the representations of things which, in their own nature, interest us strongly. The latter however is always the greater pleasure. I am more pleased with a portrait of my friend than with that of a stranger, allowing both to be equally well executed, simply because the person it represents is more interesting to me than a stranger; but I am still pleased with the portrait of a stranger if it be well executed, though the pleasure is much less than in the former case. The one is the pleasure of mere imitation, the other of imitation, and the thing imitated. If the portrait of the stranger

had been executed with greater skill than that of my friend, it would still impart less pleasure, which shows that the subject is of more importance than the genius with which it is executed. A lover would not exchange an indifferent portrait of his fair one for the transfiguration of Raphael. Hence a tragic writer of inferior talent, will produce a more pleasing and successful tragedy, if he be happy in his subject, than a writer of the most transcendent genius, whose imitation is of things that are not fitted in themselves to excite strong sensations. Can any thing, then, be more obvious than that no power of genius can avail a tragic writer, unless he know, antecedently, what it is that produces Tragic Pleasure, or unless he know that Tragic Pleasure can only be produced by producing strong sensations, emotions, or passions, a position which it has been the object of this work to establish. Possessed of this knowledge, he selects only such subjects and characters, and places them in such situations and relations to each other as affect us strongly; but, without a knowledge of what causes this pleasure, he takes up his subject at random, unless, like Schlegel, he adopt an erroneous theory, and imagine that a feeling of the dignity of human nature is the cause of Tragic Pleasure. If, however, he adopt this theory, his situation is still worse, because he always aims at supporting the dignity of his characters. In doing so, his charac-

ters have no character, because they are *toujours le même*, always the same unchanged and unchangeable beings. With such beings we cannot sympathize. We know instinctively they are not such men as we are ourselves; that they have not a particle of human nature in them; in a word, that they are the mere creatures of the understanding, who have no nature of their own, and are mere automatons in the hands of the poet. It is very evident that he who acts a dignified part where there is no occasion for it, acts as unnaturally as Captain Flash, who, to conceal his fears, cries out, "*what a damned passion I am in.*" If the captain were really in a passion, he would never have thought of it; because a man under the immediate influence of passion, never reflects that he is in a passion, having his whole mind directed to the object by which his passion has been excited. It is equally unnatural to be dignified on all occasions, or, more correctly speaking, upon any occasion in which it is not called for, or which does not put our dignity to the test. "There is a time to laugh and a time to cry," and there is no dignity in either. The dignified man consequently neither laughs nor cries; but the natural man, he who is guided by the original laws of his own nature, and the influences by which it is governed, laughs and cries whenever he has cause. It is only natural beings, however, with whom we can sympathize in tragedy,

for the instant we perceive, or even suspect the least appearance of art, we awaken from the illusion that has laid hold of our sympathies; and laugh either at our own folly or the unskilfulness of the poet, whose violation of nature, or want of art to conceal his art, has awoken us from our dreams.

All the other theories which I have quoted on the subject of Tragic Pleasure would lead us into similar violations of nature. They restrain the poet from entering into that wide career which nature has placed before him. They tell him that though man is subject to an infinite number of different propensities, sensations, feelings, passions, affections, and modes of sympathy, he must attend only to one law or affection of his nature; that he must perpetually endeavour to keep this affection alive; that he must make all his characters, in whatever situation he places them, act under the influence of this affection, and obey no other law or propensities of his nature. Hence, his characters will be more influenced in their sentiments more determined in the course which they intend to pursue, by the influence of this particular affection, than by the influence of the situation in which they are placed, while the natural man acts always under the influence of the moment. His affections, feelings, sentiments, and sympathies, are, consequently, changing with every change of cir-

cumstance and external influence, so that the *toujours le même* of the systematic poet can never be applied to him.

The theory which I have adopted on the source of Tragic Pleasure, confines the poet to no particular system. In every tragedy there must be a system, so far as regards the unity, harmony, design, plot, &c. of the piece; but if it appear, from what I have advanced on the subject, that all strong sensations, emotions, and passions, are pleasing to man, it is very obvious that the tragic poet is not confined to any particular law or affection of his nature, because he is pleased with every sentiment and situation that produces a strong impression; provided always that these sentiments and situations arise naturally from the progress of events. If it should be asked, how is the poet to know whether his images, situations, sentiments, &c. are naturally placed, and harmonize with each other, I reply, that this knowledge cannot be communicated by any precepts of art, and that he who has not taste and judgment to discover the propriety of the relations which he has formed between all the individual members of his piece, must be satisfied to remain ignorant of it. It is in this discrimination, and perception of propriety, that the writer of genius displays his superiority. The characters, images, sentiments, affections, modes of sympathy, circumstances, situations,



events, &c. that may be introduced into a tragedy, are each of them infinitely diversified. There may be an infinite diversity of character, an infinite variety of images, sentiments, &c. Again, there is an infinite number of modes in which they can be brought together. In this infinity of conjunctions, and infinite variety of things conjoined, it is very obvious that no less than an infinity of rules can enable us to distinguish propriety from impropriety; because the image, sentiment, &c. which is proper in one conjunction, would be absurd in another. Yet, in all this variety, the writer of just feeling can determine instinctively without rule or precept.

To bring the whole of what I have said on this subject to a conclusion; it is obvious that the pleasures derived from Tragic Representations do not arise from a sense of the dignity of human nature, nor from any other particular sense; that every thing, except in the cases which I have already mentioned, pleases us which produces a strong impression, and that nothing can please us when this strong impression is not made. If it be asked what produces a strong impression; I answer, the question is easily resolved. The monument in the Arcadia of Poussin, the ghost in Hamlet, the dagger in Macbeth, the tempest in Lear, the poison taken by Romeo, and a thousand

similar causes will produce strong sensations in us, all of which will be attended with pleasure.

But if it be asked, what other, or how many other causes produce strong sensations? I answer, that the number is without number. I could point out some hundreds, perhaps some thousands of them; but this could serve no purpose, as not only thousands but millions would still remain. If, however, I am asked how is the tragic writer to determine whether the circumstances and situations in which he places his characters please or not; I think I can give a general rule. If he place any of his characters in such a situation as would produce a strong sensation in himself, were he placed in it, it will produce the same sensation in the audience. They are men who are governed by the same influences by which he is governed. If, therefore, he invent a situation which would strongly affect himself were he placed in it, this situation will equally affect the audience; and they will sympathize with any person whom they find placed in it, provided it be introduced without inconsistency. But, perhaps it may be said, that a tragic writer cannot always tell how he would feel affected in a certain situation, and, consequently, cannot determine how to conduct his characters through it. If this should be the case, I would advise such a writer to leave tragedy to others, and turn to something else. If nature has

denied him feeling, it cannot be imparted to him by art ; and if he possess it, he can never be at a loss to determine how he would feel affected in any situation. I am willing to allow, that the audience will feel strongly affected by passages, sentiments, and situations in a tragedy, which would have no effect on some tragic writers; but then I deny, that such writers could ever have placed such passages, sentiments, or situations before them. He who cannot feel affected by what he writes himself, will never affect those who read his productions. Nature has wisely ordered, that he who has no ardour of feeling in himself should be incapable of producing any thing that can excite it in others. He, therefore, who hopes to produce an affecting tragedy without original sensibility of feeling, is building castles in the air. If he cannot feel himself, he cannot make others feel.

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Si vis me flere,  
Dolendum est primum tibi ipsi.

The tragic writer should, therefore, never aim to excite weak or feeble sensations. He should always seek to produce effect by the agency of natural causes ; for if he fail in producing strong sensations, his tragedy can have no interest, and, consequently, can impart no pleasure. The desire of producing effect in painting, generally leads to a perverted taste ; particularly where the subject is

a portrait of sensible or external nature ; as landscapes, &c. The transitions in painting never should be too sudden, except on extraordinary occasions, because the appearances of nature are generally united by shades which gradually melt into each other ; and unless the painter delineate with a delicate hand these associating shades, he does violence to nature, and destroys that effect which he intended to produce. A portrait of *human* nature, however, should essentially differ from that of sensible or inanimate existence ; because the appearances which it presents are totally different. Inanimate nature, as I have just shewn, varies its appearances by insensible degrees ; but animate or human nature, starts suddenly and precipitately from one appearance, or extreme, to another ; and our philosophy fails us the moment we attempt to discover a connecting link. The man who is at this moment a lamb will present himself at the next moment a raging lion ; and the dramatic writer, who would give a faithful portrait of human nature, must start suddenly after him, and paint him as he finds him. If he cannot keep pace with the rapidity and violence of human passion, but wait to inform us of the imperceptible causes that lead from one passion to another, he is no describer of human nature ; because, the very man who rushes from one extreme of passion to another, cannot always tell himself

the secret impulse by which he is guided. The tragic poet must, therefore, describe appearances, or portraits of human nature which are totally distinct from each other, though they lie side by side. The links, or shades, by which these appearances or extremes of passion are united, must be kept in the back-ground, and their discovery left to the imagination of the reader or spectator. He must therefore always study what the painter of inanimate nature should almost always avoid; namely, the production of effect. The transitions in the prominent features of his characters, their humours, passions, and eccentricities, must be sudden and rapid, in order to keep pace with the untamed energies and instant determinations of human nature. The poet who does this cannot possibly awaken in us cold or feeble sensations; and the poet who neglects to do so, writes only to amuse himself; for he who cannot follow human passion, or tread in her footsteps, whether she mount the daring steeps that oppose her progress, or rush down the precipices which threaten her with instant destruction, will write tragedy to no purpose if it be intended for representation. A tragedy not teeming with circumstances fitted to produce either strong emotions or passions, is sealed with the signet of oblivion, and its first representation will most probably be its last, except it be represented before an audience of philosophers.

Addison's Cato, no doubt, would succeed very well if we could once throw off human nature, and view every thing through the medium of the understanding. We can hardly meet with a finer picture of the precipitancy of human determination, and the suddenness with which it starts from one extreme to the other, from the slumber of indolence to the whelming impetuosity of passion, than what is represented in the following passage ; and yet it is not so much a picture of human nature as the real instinctive expression of nature itself.

*Oemyn.* By heav'n thou'st roused me from my lethargy,  
 The spirit which was deaf to my own wrongs,  
 And the loud cries of my dead father's blood,  
 Deaf to revenge,—nay, which refused to hear  
 The piercing sighs and murmurs of my love  
 Yet unenjoyed : what not Almeida could  
 Revive or raise, my people's voice has waken'd.  
 O my Antonio, I am all on fire ;  
 My soul is up in arms ready to charge,  
 And bear amidst the foe with conquering troops.  
 I hear 'em call to lead 'em on to liberty,  
 To victory ; their shouts and clamours rend  
 My ears, and reach the heavens : where is the king ?  
 Where is Alphonso ? ha ! where ! where : indeed ?  
 O I could tear and burst the strings of life,  
 To break these chains. Off, off ye stains of royalty !  
 Off slavery ! O curse ! that I alone  
 Can beat and flutter in my cage ; when I  
 Would soar, and stoop at victory beneath !

*Mourning Bride, Act 3, Scene 2.*

The tragic poet, however, though he can never bring forward a tragedy that will succeed on the stage, unless it teem with those deep, striking, and affecting situations which excite strong sensations in us, should still carefully avoid attempting to create these sensations too soon ; not only because his audience are not prepared for them, and must be warmed to passion by degrees ; but because the entire interest is lost if a stronger sensation be followed by a weaker. The instant our feelings are raised to the highest, and that we know there is nothing to follow which can affect us more powerfully than we are at the moment, we instinctively make a motion to rise and be gone. We cherish the sensation with which we are impressed as a sacred and hallowed feeling ; a test of our humanity which it would be an insult to our nature to suffer to be eradicated by the slighter sympathies which are to follow. But if some deeper and more affecting scene is still to be presented to us, we prepare ourselves for a still greater trial and exercise of our sympathies ; and we regard the strong sensation of the moment only as a foretaste of those deep and heart-rending emotions by which it is to be followed ; because the stronger the sensation the greater our pleasure.

The poet must, therefore, so order his scenes and situations that they shall rise in interest and

importance, so that a more affecting shall never precede a less affecting scene ; for in this case a stronger sensation would precede a weaker, and, consequently, destroy its effect. Every scene will have its full effect upon us if it be stronger, or produce stronger sensations than that which precede it ; but we are inattentive to what we should otherwise consider the most affecting scene, if it should happen to be preceded by one still more affecting ; a proof, among many others, that the strongest sensation is that which our nature embraces with the most adhesive grasp. It is, therefore, only from the creation of scenes fitted to excite these strong impressions, that the tragic writer, whatever genius he may possess, can ever hope to succeed in such pieces as he intends for the stage ; for, in the absence of such scenes, he will derive no advantage from following the theories of those who deduce Tragic Pleasure from “ a sense of the dignity of human nature ;” nor from “ a comparison between the tranquillity of our own situation and the distress to which the victims of Tragic Representation are exposed ;” nor from “ our feeling of moral improvement which is gratified by the view of poetical justice, in the reward of the good and the punishment of the wicked ;” nor from “ fable operating on our passions, by representing its events as operating in our sight, and deluding us into a conviction of reality ;” nor from “ the



energies and violent efforts displayed in feats of strength, courage, and dexterity, or the calm energies of virtue called forth by the exertions of passive fortitude ;" nor from any other source whatever, as I have clearly proved in the first part of this work. The tragic poet may be acquainted with all these theories, and a thousand more, ascribing the entire pleasure to one particular feeling of our nature ; but unless he present the audience with a succession of scenes, situations, &c. creating a greater and a greater interest ; and, consequently, exciting stronger and stronger sensations, the audience will depart unsatisfied, and the pleasure, whose origin has been the subject of the present work, will be found to have no existence.

The tragic poet selects his characters either from the real or ideal world, from history or imagination. The latter being a mere copy or type of the former, produces, as in all cases of imitation, a weaker impression. Two poets of equal genius, and equally happy in the selection and invention of their subject, will have very different success with the public, if one take his subject from history, the other from imagination ; for that which has only the appearance of reality, but which we know to be the pure offspring of fiction, can never affect us like that which we know to be founded in real facts. Facts derive their interest from two sources, and affect us, accordingly, either as individuals or

as men in general. A fact is either important on its own account, or important as regards a certain number of individuals. If the former, it interests all mankind : if the latter, it interests only the individuals concerned, and this last interest is always the strongest. Hence every nation takes more delight in tragedies taken from its own history than in those taken from the history of other nations ; and in those taken from the history of other nations more than in tragedies taken from imagination. But facts of a momentous and important nature are interesting to all men, from the mere circumstance of their being important, though not so interesting to any particular nation, as those which are taken from its own history. A tragedy, however, may be founded in the history of our country and still be uninteresting. Du Bos justly observes, that the subject of the *Eneid* was more interesting to the Roman people than to any other nation ; and it may be truly said, that the subject of Richard III. is more interesting to an Englishman than *Coriolanus*. There are exceptions however to this rule. A tragedy, from whatever history it is taken, will be more interesting to all nations, if it excite strong sensations and give a true portrait of human nature, than a tragedy taken from the history of any particular nation will be to the very nation from which it is taken, if it describe passions, feelings, and sympathies, that could not arise naturally,

either from the individual characters of the *dramatis personæ*, or the peculiar situation in which they are placed. Lear, for instance, is a tragedy that must interest all mankind, because it is a perfect delineation of human nature, of its frailties, and its passions. When I say it is a perfect delineation of human nature," I mean to say, that it is a perfect picture or description of the manner in which particular characters act or are acted upon when placed in particular situations. Whenever an individual is placed in a distressful situation, we cannot help sympathizing with him, to whatever country he belongs.

*Homo sum ; humani nihil a me alienum puto.*

It is certain, however, that, *cæteris paribus*, we will enter more deeply into the feelings, and share more in the affections of our own countrymen, than in those of any other.

It is obvious then, that the best tragedy is that which unites both the interests of which I have spoken ; namely, the tragedy which, from its very nature, interests all mankind, and from its subject is more particularly interesting to the nation for which it is written.

Having shewn that writers of the greatest genius may fail, and have failed in producing that interest without which a tragedy is frequently damned on the first night of its representation, while writers

of inferior merit have succeeded beyond all expectation, a question naturally arises, how this comes to pass; for if both be equally ignorant of the true source of Tragic Pleasure, why should not the one succeed as well as the other? The theory which I have adopted on the subject will, if I mistake not, easily explain the mystery. The pleasure arising from Tragic Representation, as I have already shown, arises not from beauty of language, delicacy of sentiment, beauty of imagery, refinement of idea, nicety of discrimination, chastity of expression, purity of style, perspicuity of diction, simplicity of manners, or any of those qualities which constitute the beauty of language in general. These characteristics of elegant style, however, are those which are chiefly sought after and most generally acquired by elegant and polished writers; for that which we are most eager and solicitous of obtaining is generally that which we are most certain of acquiring. In proportion, however, as we refine and polish our style, and attain those attic graces, and that elegance of taste which entitle us to rank among classical writers, we frequently lose that energy, that vigour, that enthusiasm, that rapidity, that *vivida vis animi*, that "soul of soul," which is the very essence and quintessence, and life and spirit, of the tragic muse; and without which no tragedy ever imparted that pleasure which has been the subject of our inquiry. He

who dwells too long in analyzing and scrutinizing the propriety of every thing he says, loses in strength and energy of sentiment what he gains in purity and accuracy of expression. While the head is at work in purifying our language and arranging our thoughts, the heart and its operations shrink from a task totally opposite to their nature, and subside insensibly into a dead calm. The moment this calm takes place, the tragic writer has no longer any source whence he can draw his portraits and delineations of human nature, but the faint recollections of former and half-forgotten feelings, or the suggestions of fancy and imagination. Imagination, however, supplies us only with images that are fit to amuse itself. A writer of imagination pleases only the imagination of his readers; the writer of feeling alone can reach the heart, and raise into being all the slumbering and latent faculties, energies, and sympathies of our nature. Hence it is that in all countries, the most polished and elegant writers have had least success in writing for the stage. Racine was, perhaps, the most correct writer that France ever produced, not excepting Voltaire himself, but as a dramatic writer he is greatly inferior to Corneille. Yet Corneille had neither the grace, the elegance, the delicacy of expression, nor beauty of versification which characterize Racine. To what then does Corneille owe his superiority if not to that fire and animation

which was not suffered to grow cool in the act of composition. He suffered not his imagination to go in pursuit of far-fetched associations, or linger in the council-room of the understanding to discuss which of many terms was the most elegant and refined. He did not, like Racine, turn his object round about and view it in all directions before he ventured to describe it, but seized on it under the first aspect that presented itself to his view. He described accordingly the impression which it made upon him vividly and warmly, but Racine suffered the impression to die away while he was considering the aspect in which he should represent it to the audience. Elegance, dress, adornment, and polish, is therefore the very bane of that energy and native strength of diction which alone can rouse into life and being those strong sensations, emotions, and passions, to which tragic pleasure owes its existence. It is not necessary to recur to the French stage to prove this truth. As Corneille surpassed Racine, so did Shakspeare precede all the dramatic writers of his country, at least all whose names are worthy of notice. But Shakspeare precedes them not only in order of time, but in order of dramatic genius. Voltaire calls him a savage; but he was a savage which the refined Voltaire himself could never equal. He was no doubt a savage—a total stranger to the lighter charms and graces of classic elegance and refinement,

But such charms and graces are fit only to amuse the imagination, for there never was an instance of any tragedy succeeding of which those lighter charms and graces formed the principal character.

These light-winged graces and embellishments are all the offspring of art : they are a species of machinery devised and constructed by the co-operation of the understanding and imagination ; but the expression of real and undisguised feeling, or the unfolding of feeling exactly as it is felt, has no alliance whatever with art : it is the work of nature and its charms are the charms of nature. It is difficult however for him who is chiefly solicitous about the form of his expression to attain to these charms, because the understanding and the heart can never be brought into action at the same moment, without weakening each other. He who is all life and feeling, and passion, has no time to exercise, or rather never thinks of exercising his understanding, but writes what his feelings and passions inspire ; but he who loves to consult his understanding alone, and pays no attention to his feelings, has neither feeling nor passion to give inspiration to his muse.

The critics of the present day are greatly perplexed in seeking to account for the barrenness and poverty of our dramatic productions. The author of " a Letter to the Dramatists of the Day," which appeared lately in the London Magazine, has many good observations on the subject, but though his


letter is a pretty long one, and runs through more than one number of the Magazine, all the precepts he lays down to regulate the conduct of dramatic writers may be rigidly followed, and yet fail of producing that interest, and of imparting that pleasure, which is sought for on the stage, and without producing which no tragedy ever succeeded. The critic who lays down a just principle without knowing why it is just, and, consequently, without being able to assign a reason for it, tends frequently to lead his followers astray instead of withdrawing them from their errors ; for what we call true principles in criticism are all, without an individual exception, false principles, if improperly applied : they are only true in their right place. Hence it is, that when we point out an error in the productions of an ignorant writer, and lay down the principle by which we prove it to be wrong, he adopts this principle afterwards as a guide ; not only in similar cases, but in cases where it has no application, and where consequently it becomes as erroneous as the principles by which he was originally guided. Hence it is that writers who cannot perceive when they ought to be guided by a principle, and when they ought to avoid it, are always sailing between Scylla and Charybdis, always either in the frying pan or in the fire ; for as Horace observes,

*Dum vitant stulti vitia in contraria currunt.*



It is impossible, however, for any writer to know whether a principle be applicable to him or not, unless he know out of what the truth of the principle arises ; and as the author of the letter just alluded to is very evidently ignorant of the true source of Tragic Pleasure, all the precepts he lays down, though true in themselves, are of no use to the dramatic writer, because he does not explain when and where they are true, when and where they are applicable, and why they are applicable. One of the reasons he assigns for the superiority of our ancient over our modern dramatic writers, is, that their plots were more interesting. This is a mere woman's reason. To what purpose is the dramatist told that his piece can have no success unless he has an interesting plot, unless he is told, at the same time, what renders a plot interesting. Who is so stupid as not to know that his plot should be interesting if he knew how to render it so : and who does not endeavour to render it so as much as he can ? To say then that the plot should be interesting is to say nothing ; and to say that the ancients were superior to the moderns, because their plots were more interesting, is only saying they were superior because they were superior, which is, as I have already observed, a woman's reason. But if this gentleman, who, by the bye, treats the poor dramatists very cavalierly, were asked what renders a plot interesting, what constitutes the

elements of an interesting plot, and in what manner should these elements be brought together and disposed of, he would find himself as nonplussed as the dramatists, for out of the same elements, incidents, sentiments, situations, &c. some millions of plots could be formed all totally different from each other, and yet all of them interesting, all of them natural. But how is all this to be effected unless by bringing the various constituent ingredients or elements together in a different manner? Now, if Mr. Lacy, the writer of this letter, could point out how they could be brought together in so many millions of ways, and form so many millions of plots, all interesting and natural, the dramatists would have good reason to thank him; but when he says to them, go to, you race of dunces, who cannot perceive that the sole cause of your failure consists in not making your plots interesting enough, they may very justly turn round upon him and say, who could have thought of telling us so but such a dunce as yourself? We know a great part at least of our failure consists in not having succeeded in giving our plots sufficient interest; but unless you can instruct us how to do so, how much wiser are you than ourselves? It is absurd to lay down, or pretend to lay down, rules to govern the dramatic writer, so far as regards the harmony that exists between all the parts of his composition, for as some millions of interest-



ing tragedies may be formed out of a few elements, so also may some millions of false, uninteresting ones. Each of these tragedies, however, is to be governed by laws and principles peculiar to itself ; and the critic must certainly have more presumption than understanding who would legislate to dramatists, and point out to them all these laws and principles before these millions of tragedies were composed, as each of them should have laws peculiar to itself. The fact is, that all the laws, canons, and principles of criticism that have ever been promulgated, owe their existence to the works on which they were originally founded ; and it is a fact equally certain, that they can have no application to works of a different nature, except in those points wherein they agree with each other. Hence, if any writer commenced an original work, original not only in its design, but in its manner and execution, he should be governed by principles that were never heard of before, because the subject was different from any that was ever handled before. It is in the nature of every subject to create laws for itself ; for if it were governed by the laws and principles of any other subject, it would, instead of being an original subject, be a mere copy of that subject by whose laws it was governed. To suppose that there are fixed laws and principles to which all subjects must conform, is to suppose that there are certain fixed qualities without which

no woman, no statue, no painting, no any thing can be beautiful. Now if there be such qualities I should wish to know what they are. Critics and philosophers, it is true, have racked their brains in search of them, but have they ever found them? have any two of them agreed as to the common quality or qualities which constitute beauty? Dugald Stewart places them in colour, form, and motion, but in doing so is he not even more absurd than Mr. Lacy, the author of the letter on which I am now commenting. To what purpose are we told that beauty consists in colour, form, and motion, unless we are told what particular colour, what particular form, and what particular motion constitute beauty? The most deformed animal in the creation has colour and form; and as to motion, Mr. Stewart himself must acknowledge it is not an essential ingredient in beauty, for there are millions of objects which all men will pronounce beautiful, and yet they have no motion whatever, unless they receive it from some external impulse. The Apollo of Belvidere has no motion in itself, and yet all men acknowledge it a beautiful statue. If then we confine beauty to colour and form, a Hottentot female, with her "head coming first and her tail coming after," is a beautiful woman, for she has colour and form. In fact, if colour and form constitute beauty, all

objects are beautiful, for all objects have colour and form. Professor Stewart's theory of beauty is, therefore, perfectly chimerical, and so are all the other theories that have ever been formed on the subject, which I could prove as absurd as Mr. Stewart's, if the nature of my subject permitted me to enter into the question. A painting may be beautiful, and a horse may be beautiful, but wherein does a horse resemble a painting? If then we can lay down no fixed principles that constitute beauty, why pretend to lay down fixed principles by which a writer is to be guided whatever be his subject. Hence it is, that a thousand, a million, nay millions of tragedies may all be interesting and beautiful, and yet all different from each other, and governed by laws peculiar to themselves. To say then that modern tragedies are unsuccessful because their plots are not interesting, is equivalent to saying a woman is not beautiful because she is ugly. If the writer of this letter, however, perceived, that the interest of a plot consisted in its being adapted to excite strong sensations, emotions, or passions, he would have given the gentlemen to whom he addressed himself a clue to the production of an interesting plot; because they would perceive that however ingenious they were in devising it, however skilfully and intricately it was composed, it still had no chance of succeeding on the stage,

unless it was calculated to excite those stronger affections of the mind in the excitement of which Tragic Pleasure can alone consist.

Mr. Lacy very justly observes, that a tragedy may be interesting without poetic ornament or embellishment, and uninteresting, however highly adorned by imagery, elegance of diction, and other attributes merely poetical; but what avails it to know that tragic interest does not consist in these qualities of writing without knowing in what it consists. This, however, Mr. Lacy imagines he has discovered when he informs the dramatist that the first grand leading essential attribute of drama, whereby it is distinguished from all other species of literature, and without which it is not what it professes to be, is *action*. It is difficult to conceive how action can be considered a species of literature, or in other words, how that part of the drama which consists of action can be considered a species of literature. But Mr. Lacy himself puts an irrefutable objection to his own theory into the mouths of the dramatists, which I shall first quote, and afterwards bring another objection against it myself, which I am of opinion will completely set his theory at rest.

“My belief deceives me, say you?” (he makes the dramatists speak,) however impalpable our plots may be, however unattractive, insubstantial, and delible our stories, still our plots are plots, our

stories are stories, and being carried on or related by the several characters prefixed to our tragedies, under the denomination of *dramatis personæ*, constitute the action of our pieces ; ‘ now, infidel, we have thee on the hip.’ ”

To these objections to his own theory Mr. Lacy replies in his own peculiar and swaggering manner, “ Soft you ; a word or two before you go. What are we speaking of, gentlemen defendants ? Drama ? No. Tragedy ? No. But of *legitimate* drama, *effective* tragedy.” Bravo, Mr. Lacy, if *effective* words have any *effect*, you are completely in the right box. But, to be serious, Mr. Lacy then proceeds to shew that their tragedies are not effective ones. But what has all this to do with the objection of the dramatists to his theory of action. They say, we have plots and stories which are carried on by the *dramatis personæ*, and, therefore, we have action. If then action alone renders a tragedy interesting, ours should be interesting ? and their want of interest proves that something else is required to confer interest on dramatic works. Mr. Lacy endeavours to get over this unanswerable objection by saying, we are not talking of the drama, nor of tragedy, but of *legitimated* drama, *effective* tragedy. Softly, Mr. Lacy, you are not talking of either. The question regards not the drama, nor tragedy, nor *legitimate* drama, nor *effective* tragedy : you are talking of action, Mr. Lacy, and

your business is to prove that the whole interest of dramatic works arises from action. Because you maintain that the failure of modern tragedies arises from want of action. But how is this proved by shewing that their tragedies are not *effective*. This is mere matter of fact, not matter of reasoning; but your business was to show, not that their tragedies were not effective, but that the want of action was the cause of their not being effective. The matter at issue between you and the dramatists is this:—you say their tragedies fail for want of action,—they say, no;—our tragedies have action. Not being able to prove the contrary, you say, we are not talking of tragedy but of *effective* tragedy; and because their tragedies are not effective their argument does not apply. It happens, however, that you are talking of neither. *Action* is your subject. But, say you, Hamlet, Lear, Macbeth, or Othello, is superior to all their tragedies “on the sole ground of action.” Indeed! And pray, Mr. Lacy, who told you so? This is a mere assertion of your own, and assertions require proofs. Who knows but their superiority arises from some other cause? That action is not the sole cause is evident, for all our modern tragedies have action as well as those of Shakspeare. Supposing I were to say, that Shakspeare’s plays were superior to our modern ones, because they awaken stronger sensations, emotions, and passions, in the



human breast ; might I not be as near the truth as you are ? If you ask my proofs, I have given them already. But you will reply, no doubt, that sensations are produced by action. This cannot be, for if they were, our modern tragedies would produce them. But the action, you say, should be *perpetual*. I say no, and I say, also, that whether the action be perpetual or not, it is at no time the action, but the nature of the action, that creates the interest ; and without knowing what this nature is, we may preach to eternity about action, and leave our readers as wise as they were at setting out. Who has more action than he who talks most vehemently ? and what can be less pleasing than this action, unless it arise from strong and powerful emotions. To say that the action should be *perpetual*, is to maintain the wildest and most senseless of all theories. There must be proper pauses between those parts which most strongly affect the mind ; for if no such pause were granted, if the interest continued increasing without a moment's intermission, the consequence would be, that every individual would, in a very short time, be so overpowered by his feelings that he would either abandon the theatre to relieve the intensity of his emotions, (for the extreme of pleasure is always painful,) or otherwise, by arming himself against his own feelings, and subduing them by force, he would remain insensible

to the most affecting scenes that could afterwards be represented on the stage. The sensitive soul is so formed by nature that it always relieves itself in some manner, which frequently leads it to run suddenly from one extreme to another. Hence it frequently passes from the extreme of pity to that of indifference. Mr. Lacy is an enemy to *speechification*, because it causes a cessation of action, but some of the finest and most affecting scenes in tragedy are to be met with in speeches, particularly in love speeches. Whoever would reject that inimitable scene in the third act of *Romeo and Juliet*; in which Juliet endeavours to make Romeo believe that it is not yet day; whoever, I say, would reject this scene because it makes a pause in the action, possesses certainly no very enviable taste. The fact is, that all those things which Mr. Lacy finds fault with, are all right in their right place, and all right things are wrong when out of their place.

But if action be truly the real source of tragic interest, what need is there of good performers or good tragic writers? Any person who is quick enough upon his legs can display as much action as Kean or Kemble, but would any nimble person be able to give the same interest to his action. But Mr. Lacy will reply, every body knows that the action of an indifferent performer cannot please, however full of action he may

be : but if every body knows it, why labour to prove what every body knows to be wrong? If then mere action will not please by itself, it is a mere accident accompanying the real cause of Tragic Pleasure. But if we are ignorant of this real cause, to what purpose are we made acquainted with the accident? Will Mr. Lacy pretend to say, that whoever is made acquainted with the accident must necessarily be acquainted with the cause? If he does he will find himself greatly in error. We all know that pleasure may be communicated through the medium of action, but we know also that every species and mode of action will not impart this pleasure. And to hit upon that particular mode which is most effective and natural, so far from being known to every person, is known to very few. It is the study of a man's life, nor can even this study acquire it without natural genius. To know, then, what particular action pleases, *hic labor, hoc opus est*. What avails it therefore to dwell on the necessity of action, for we may be acquainted with this necessity and still be as incapable of producing tragic interest as if we knew nothing about it. Mr. Lacy accordingly advises the dramatists of the day to fill up their tragedies with action, if I mistake not, to little purpose, for a play may be ever so full of action and active scenes, and impart no pleasure whatever. Shakspeare advises to "suit the action to the word, and the word to

the action;" but unless both be suited to the sentiments, circumstances, situations, feelings, sympathies, and emotions, from which they are supposed to arise, and also to that infinite variety of influences which arise from the union, contrast, and opposition of these sentiments, circumstances, situations, &c., neither the word nor the action, however well suited they may be to each other, will ever impart that interest from which Tragic Pleasure arises. I shall take my leave of Mr. Lacy by concluding, that a rapid succession of events will never impart Tragic Pleasure, unless each event be interesting in itself, and arise naturally from those which preceded it; and that the art of conferring this interest upon, and preserving this harmony between, all the events, is an art of which we may be totally ignorant, however well aware we may be that such a succession of events is necessary.

But while I thus shew that however well the dramatists of the day may be acquainted with the necessity, if not of perpetual action, at least of an approach to it, they might still be as far from knowing the true secret of producing Tragic Pleasure, as if they were perfectly ignorant of it; I may be required to assign a better reason myself for the failure of modern tragedies, if I know a better. Mr. Lacy may say to me,

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*Si quid novisti rectius istis  
Candidus imperti; si non, his utere mecum.*

The demand is just and I shall endeavour to comply with it.

Some writers attribute the failure of modern tragedies to "the introduction of French rules, both in criticism and composition." These rules, they say, "gradually changed" the "aspect" of the drama, "and brought along with it a taste for the principles and structure of the Greek tragedy, on which the French is founded, and which indeed it very closely resembles."\* But to this explanation two objections very obviously present themselves; first, why should the introduction of French rules produce the effect ascribed to it; for if our dramatic performers happened instead of deteriorating to be greatly improved, when these rules were introduced, the improvement might be accounted for in the same manner; and instead of saying, that French rules corrupted our taste for dramatic compositions, the reviewer might say, that the improvement which took place at the time, was entirely owing to the introduction of these rules. It avails nothing then to say that French rules corrupted our drama, unless a reason be assigned, shewing that French rules are calculated to produce such an effect. The second objection to the cause to which the reviewer ascribes

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\* Quarterly Review, vol. 17, Article, Sheil's Apostate.

the failure of our late tragedies is, that if he even assigned a reason we should look upon it with great suspicion, for if it were a good reason, why not produce the same effect in France. French rules are surely followed more by French than by English dramatists ; and if there be any thing in the nature of those rules calculated to destroy the interest of dramatic compositions, the more they are followed the more the interest is destroyed. The French, however, do not complain as we do ; though if the reason ascribed by the reviewer were a good one, they would have much greater reason for complaint, unless it can be shewn that they are differently constituted from us, and are consequently differently affected by the same influences. That their habits and manners are different I am very ready to admit, but that they differ from us in the original passions and propensities of human nature, no man can assert without publishing, at the same time, his own ignorance of human nature, and of the history of the human species. In all countries, and in all ages, these passions and propensities are the same. They are as immutable as nature itself, while habits and manners are eternally presenting a new aspect. The delineation of habits and manners, however, is not the object of tragedy. It is entirely conversant in disclosing and portraying the original sympathies and affections of the heart, and leaves habits and

manners to the airy pencil of the Comic muse. Accordingly, France, England, and all countries differ materially in their comedies, because in all countries comic writers find the manners and habits of the country in which they live, the most fertile source of comic wit. Hence it is that in all countries comic writers choose the time in which they live for the scene of their comedies; whereas the scene of a tragedy is always, or, at least, should always be placed in remoter times. If the scenes of a comedy were placed in a former age, the writer could not describe the manners of that age; and if he were even acquainted with them and succeeded happily in turning them into ridicule, his wit would be lost upon his audience, because they could not perceive the force of it without being themselves familiar with the manners which it ridiculed or exposed. It is different with tragedy, for in all ages human passion is the same, and, therefore, a scene laid three hundred years ago, can describe no other passions than those which exist at present.

Whatever, then, has led to the deterioration of English tragedy, would produce the same effect in any other country; and as the cause to which the reviewer ascribes it, operated more in France than here, the effect which he also ascribes to it would be more striking there, and the want of interest in French would be still greater than in English tragedies.

The insipidity which we do so much complain of in modern English tragedies, appears to me to arise from one cause, and our complaint of them from two, namely, from the cause that virtually renders them insipid, and which I shall presently endeavour to explain, and from a disposition in those who affect to be critical judges in the matter, to make our best tragedies appear worse than they are. A critic never obtains so much credit by praise as by censure, because, when he points out the beauties of any composition, he only describes what is actually placed before him : he only calls things by their proper names, and we read him under an impression that the author on whom he comments is greatly his superior, because he himself acknowledges his merits, in pointing out his beauties ; and as we seldom praise those of whom we form no higher opinion than of ourselves, we are always inclined to suspect that the person praised is a greater man than he who praises him. But the critic who finds fault proclaims himself at once a greater man than he whom he censures, for he virtually says, I would not commit such a blunder as this, I would treat the matter differently ; and yet it is certain that a more exquisite discrimination and a more cultivated taste are necessary to perceive what is beautiful than to expose what is vicious and imperfect.



We have little difficulty in describing a deformed man so as to make any person acquainted with him know who is meant by the description, but where there is nothing marked in the countenance, such a description would be found very difficult, and the difficulty increases as the face approaches to perfect beauty. The critics, however, or those who are professedly so, are not the only people who complain of the insipidity of our modern tragedies, though they are perhaps the original cause of all the complaint, for whatever they say is reported over and over again by those who affect to be as wise as themselves. The old tragedies have no complaints of this kind to apprehend. Their character and different degrees of merit are long since fixed and established, and the critic finding how difficult it is to remove fixed opinions and impressions long entertained, finds it more prudent to say nothing about them.

That there is, however, in the generality of our modern tragedies a real insipidity cannot be doubted, and this insipidity appears to me owing to their not producing those strong sensations, emotions, and passions, without which there can be no tragic interest. They appeal more to the understanding than to the heart: and in proportion as the understanding is exercised, the heart and its sympathies not only remains, but are obliged to remain, dor-

mant. But why, it will be asked, do modern writers appeal less to the feelings than the ancients? Is not human nature, and human passions, and human propensities, and natural genius, the same now as it was in the days of Shakspeare? That human nature and human passions are the same I admit; but it is in the very nature of human nature to be governed, modified, and determined by external circumstances. Now, if the circumstances operating on the human mind at present be different from those by which it was influenced in the days of Shakspeare, it is natural the effect should be different. That the influences are different, at least with regard to writers, is a matter of fact too well known and too well authenticated to require proof. To quote historic testimony to prove it, would be mere pedantry. In the days of Shakspeare the dramatist, or the *dramatis personæ*, or more properly, their representatives on the stage, addressed themselves to an audience who judged of every circumstance, situation, and sentiment, by their feelings; an audience whose judgment was not governed by the squares and compasses of criticism, who were totally unacquainted with those factitious and acquired feelings, those unnatural impressions and unreal sympathies arising from ideal associations, false reasoning, false deductions, false principles, false theories of right and wrong, and all

those gathering, collecting, and collected elements of error which always increase with the increase of knowledge. In the state of nature, all men are equally wise, because all men have but one and the same avenue to knowledge,—namely, the light of natural reason or common sense. Metaphysical, logical, and every other species of abstract learning, is therefore unknown, and no person, unless, an impostor who professes to hold communication with a spirit, can pretend to be wiser than another, or at least so much wiser that his *ipse dixit* should be taken upon any question without hesitation or investigation. The consequence is, that as no person professes to knowledge, no person attempts to lead another astray by false principles, or false reasoning, because reason and its principles are equally unknown. Every man speaks as he feels, because he knows that even if his feelings and observations be wrong, he addresses himself to those who are incapable of setting him right. In the progress of civilization it continues for a considerable time to be the same, and it was nearly the same in the days of Shakspeare. He collected his knowledge of human nature, and of the human heart, not from books and principles of reasoning, but from mixing with the world, from becoming moulded in its ways, habituated to its manners, versed in all the various

modes of feeling which it experiences under various influences. He studied not from a copy but from the original. He viewed not man through books, through the picture given of him by others, but he viewed him as he found him. His tragedies, therefore, compared to ours, are like an original painting compared to a copy. It has the freshness, richness, and raciness of nature. It partakes of the quality of the soil, which it describes, or, in other words, Shakspeare attributes to his characters only those feelings which he knew he would feel himself were he placed in their situation, while our modern tragedies describe not man as he is, but as he appears to be through the speculum of books. Hence they are a cold, barren, and unhealthy offspring, incapable of exciting those strong sensations, emotions, and passions, which is the soul and sole origin of Tragic Pleasure.

The modern dramatist, compared to Shakspeare, stands exactly in the same situation with Virgil compared to Homer. Homer addressed himself to men who judged of right and wrong, of virtue and vice, of genius and stupidity, by their feelings alone. He had, therefore, no occasion to exercise his reason or analyzing faculties in composing his Iliad, because reason appeals only to reason. It addresses itself to the understanding not to the heart and its sensibilities, the passions and their

caprices. If the *Iliad* were, therefore, the offspring of reason and judgment, it is likely we should have never heard of it. Those for whom it was composed, and to whom it was repeated by the itinerant bards of the time, of which he was one himself, could endure only what was stripped of all intellectual disguise, and appealed to the feelings and passions at once. Homer had, therefore, only to write as he felt, for there can be no mystery in the expression of our feelings : they are not only understood but felt at the same moment ; but he who writes not what he feels to be true, but what he imagines to be true, what has no existence but what it derives from a certain process of reasoning which the writer happened to fall into, may write what is not only perfectly unintelligible, from the manner in which it is expressed, (for nothing requires greater art and method than to place complicated ideas and deductions drawn from remote and abstract sources, in a luminous order,) but what is perfectly erroneous, be it expressed how it may. Such a writer cannot be so sure of pleasing, or of rendering himself understood, as he who writes nothing but what the feelings and impulses of the moment suggest. The latter pleases all men ; he pleases those who judge only by their feelings, for the reasons already mentioned, and he pleases civilized society, because, though it is capable of appreciating works that are the result

of judgment and abstract intellect, it cannot still divest itself of that common feeling which is born with man, and which never can be totally extinguished, though education may serve to chasten, refine, and moderate its energies.

Our reasoning faculties may be perfected, or, at least, advance to the utmost bounds of human intelligence, but our original feelings and sympathies remain in a manner the same, and keep no pace with the progress of intellect. Hence the same agency produces the same feeling or passion in the poet that it produces in the peasant, because the one is as much the creature of feeling as the other; but if we address their reasoning faculties, we find them very differently affected by the enunciation of the same truth. The latter, perhaps, is incapable of understanding it, and hardly ever perceives the principles on which its truth is founded. How different then must be his impressions from him who not only perfectly understands it, but understands also why it is true, and can trace its relations to a thousand other truths. It is obvious, then, that when we address ourselves to the understanding of the peasant, we must address him differently from the poet, who seizes our meaning at a glance. But if we would excite the same passion or emotion in them, we should address them both alike. What pleases or ruffles the temper of the one will please and ruffle the

temper of the other. The appearance of a ghost will produce the same awful sensations in them. The dagger of the assassin just going to be plunged into its innocent victim, will excite the same horror and indignation in both. Whatever agency then is brought forward to excite the feelings will affect all men, the learned and the unlearned alike. Hence it is evident that the tragedy which pleases in one age will please in another,—will please in all ages, as neither the changes that take place in the expansion of intellect, nor the improvements made in the arts and sciences, tend to alter in the least the original passions of our nature. Whatever then pleased in the days of Shakspeare would please at present; and whatever pleases at present would please in the days of Shakspeare, for the original passions of our nature are always the same. It is from an ignorance of this truth, or at least from a forgetfulness of it, that our modern dramatic writers have so miserably failed in tragedy. They seem to be of opinion that, as they address a more intelligent and enlightened audience than those whom Shakspeare addressed, they should address them in a different manner, that their language should be highly polished, their sentiments highly poetic to please the taste of the age, forgetting that in tragedy there is no taste exercised whatever. When we are pleased or displeased we are so because we cannot help it, and,

therefore taste is out of the question. In tragedy, the most sparkling and brilliant sentence that ever was penned by a poet will produce no effect upon us, unless it describe some circumstance, or represent some situation or image, calculated to make a strong impression upon us, and even then it does not serve in the least to heighten the effect which such a circumstance or situation would produce, without the colouring of diction. On the contrary, it tends materially to lessen the effect by drawing our attention from the thing described to the glitter of words in which it is described. Besides, this glitter of words is so much at variance with all feelings of a deep and intense character, that it makes us suspect that the feelings and passions described are all affected; knowing as we do, that passion is never studious of expression, never seeks to clothe itself in the light robes of poetic imagery. It is not, then, the mode of describing, but the nature of the thing described, that creates tragic interest, but our modern tragic writers seem to place the whole efficacy in the form of expression; while it is certain that whatever pleases in tragedy, will please, express it as you will, *provided always* that the language be natural and conformable to common usage. When Lear says to his daughters,

Filial ingratitude!

Is it not as this mouth should tear this hand



For lifting food to it ? but I'll punish home.  
No—I will weep no more—in such a night  
To shut me out ! Pour on, I will endure.  
In such a night as this, O Regan, Gonerill,  
Your old kind father, whose frank heart gave all—  
Oh ! that way madness lies ; let me shun that ;  
No more of that.

We are evidently affected not by any peculiar happiness of expression, for it has neither grace nor elegance, (qualities which should be rather avoided than sought after in tragedy, as they make passion wear a gay, and, consequently, an unnatural appearance,) but by the feelings of indignation excited in us by that species of ingratitude which Lear describes. It is not the form of expression but the thing described that affects us, and pomp of expression serves only to weaken the effect. The most beautiful passages in Shakspeare are the most simply and unostentatiously expressed, because their beauty consists not in the expression, but in the scene or image pictured to the mind.

What words can be more simple and less ornamental than the following, and yet in this single line Lee shews the power of love more strongly than if it were encumbered with all the images that ever wanted in the dreams of the poet,

“ Then he would talk ! Good gods how he would talk.”

In short, no tragedy will ever succeed where the

language is elaborate and highly finished, for such language is always the language not of nature but of art. It requires a long apprenticeship to the art of writing and the elegancies of diction, whereas passion never stops a moment to study the beauties of expression, but always seizes instinctively those terms which are nearest at hand, and those are always what the passion or situation of the moment suggests. Hence it is that rhyme is totally destructive of nature in tragedy, for who can be supposed capable of passion who has patience to stop until he finds words and measures that jingle and harmonize with each other?

Our modern dramatists fail, therefore, because they trust more to the virtue and efficacy of language than they ought; because they do not perceive that the whole of Tragic Interest arises from the intensity of the scenes and situations which they place before us, not from describing them in flowery and poetic language, because they do not perceive that such language, so far from adding new interest to these scenes, only strips them of that deep interest which they are in themselves, independently of poetic colouring, fitted to excite, because they address their audience as an enlightened and cultivated assembly, who have too much taste to cherish any thing that is not impressed with the characters of grace and elegance, instead of addressing them as natural beings who, with all


their intellectual refinement, cannot be moved to tears by any agency whatever, but what would call forth the same hallowed stream in the days of their youth, before science and the arts had polished their manners, and given accuracy to their perceptions of truth and error, for the manners have no relation whatever with the deeper passions of the heart. The former are always changing, the latter never. Hence it is that the comic should be governed by different laws from the tragic writer ; for as manners are always changing, so should comedy always change along with them, having manners also for their object. But the laws governing the tragic writer are always the same, because the heart, and its original affections, are always the same. Comedy, however, resembles tragedy in one respect, namely, in not admitting elegance of diction, or of expression, except when it ridicules high life ; for wit loses its character, and is no longer wit, when it appears studied, and whatever is highly dressed out and ornamented has always this appearance. In all other respects it differs from tragedy.

Tragic interest consists, therefore, in placing the characters in deep situations, and describing faithfully the passions and emotions which such situations are fitted to produce ; and as they produce the same sensations and passions in all men, the tragedian should address his audience not as

a refined and cultivated assembly, but as a body of men who will be influenced by no situation or passion but what is natural to them antecedent to the progress of civilization and science. During the representation of a deep tragedy all men are the same; we are all natural beings, and moved only by natural influences. We are no longer members of polished society, no longer held in restraint by the forms and etiquette of courtly manners, or intellectual cultivation. We are no longer the creatures of art, but become once more the natural man, and live for the moment in the state of nature. Until our tragedians, therefore, cease to address us as critical judges of literary excellence and refined taste, who are more delighted with fine expressions and poetic imagery than with those deep situations which are calculated to affect us in a state of nature; in a word, until they give us credit for being, during the representation, the mere children of nature, they can never hope to excite those sensations, emotions, and passions, from which Tragic Pleasure derives its sole existence. This, however, they never do: in fact, they seem afraid of doing it. They write as if the audience came to criticise, not to be moved or affected by those powerful impulses of nature which, while we are men, we cannot resist whether we will or will not; and when we cease to be men, and to be governed by those impulses which are

not natural to man, we are no longer those beings to whom the tragic writer addresses himself. Let him then address us as men, not as cold critics, or half-animated stoics, and he will find us respond to all the deep and affecting scenes which he places before us, provided they be natural and rise naturally from each other; provided he never justifies us in saying *non sequitur*. And the more nakedly and divested of the pomp of language he introduces these scenes, the more complete will be his triumph. If beauty of language and poetic ornaments can at all be admitted, they must find expression only from such of the characters as are not deeply interested in what is going forward. Perhaps in the opening scenes they may be natural in the mouths of the principal characters before passion gets fast hold of them, before love and misfortune renders them insensible to all the lighter charms and elegancies of language.

It is with the tragic actor as with the tragic writer. He should take nature only for his model. Those who are initiated into the mysteries of the art by precept and example, who are taught to imitate the mode of acting adopted by another, can never hope to arrive at any eminence in this difficult art. It is true that certain acquirements are necessary, and must become natural from habit, to him who would attempt to represent naturally the woes and misfortunes of others; among which may be men-



tioned, that general knowledge of men and things, that acquaintance with good writers, which enables him to seize at once upon the meaning, force, and application of their sentiments, and those mechanical, or personal accomplishments which give grace and elegance to all the movements and attitudes of the body, as fencing, dancing, &c. These, however, being once acquired, practice alone can after render us perfect in dramatic action and expression, for the moment we attempt to follow another, closely and rigidly, our action necessarily becomes unnatural and constrained, simply because, instead of acting as the situation in which we are placed naturally prompts us, we are thinking only of doing our parts as we are taught to do it, which, in other words, is only doing it mechanically. It is only he who acts as the situation in which he is placed prompts him to act, that can possibly act naturally, and hence the cold, drawling, whining, declamatory tone so frequent on the stage; a tone which no person can mistake for the genuine and unpremeditated tone of nature, but he who imagines that whatever is usual must necessarily be right. It is impossible for any two to act exactly alike, and act naturally at the same time; for as we all differ more or less in our natural tempers and dispositions, so are we more or less differently affected by the same circumstances and situations. It is true that what makes

one man angry will make another angry, if both yield to their natural passions, and suffer reason to exercise no influence over them, but it is equally true that this anger will operate on them differently, and that they will express it in a different manner. In the prominent or leading characteristics of passion they will both agree, but in all its lighter shades they will differ from each other, as much as their natural tempers differ from each other before they became ruffled by this momentary agitation; and it is in giving a just expression to those lighter shades of passion that all finished excellence in acting consists. It is easy to affect being in a rage; so easy, indeed, that the most senseless and mindless cartman or coachman can affect it if he will, because the more striking qualities of the passion are easily taken off; but who can affect it with that very identical cast of countenance, and those very writhings and contortions of body which he would naturally assume, if he really felt what he describes. It is, however, only by assuming this very cast of countenance, and these very contortions of body, that he can act naturally, or in his own natural manner; and he who has no manner of his own has no manner whatever, because in abandoning his own, in order to attain that of another, he loses both, for the lighter shades and indescribable expressions which passion assumes in some men, can never be

imitated except by those who possess originally the same tempers and dispositions, of which there are few instances ; and, even in these few, the imitation is merely accidental. They imitate because they cannot help imitating, without acting contrary to their natural dispositions : because their dispositions being naturally alike, they are all affected by similar influences and similar situations ; and as similar affections lead to similar modes of external action, and give a similar cast to the expression of the countenance, they will appear on the theatre to imitate without any intention of doing so. Instruction may enable an actor to appear tolerable, but natural, unpremeditated acting can alone attain to excellence. Every man's manner is natural provided it be his own manner, nor can any man act a passion unnaturally if he be in earnest, if he feel that he is not imitating the action of another, but acting what his own feelings, emotions, and sympathies inspire. Hence a thousand actors may act differently and yet all act equally natural, so that nothing can be more fallacious than the opinion that there is only one mode of acting the same part properly, that, consequently, this mode alone should be adopted, and that whoever excels in it should be held as a model to all others. This is, in fact, supposing the actors to be all machines, who have no



feeling whatever of their own, no peculiar way of being affected by the situations in which they are placed. It is supposing that they are all cast in the same mould by the hand of nature, and all affected in the same identical degree by the same circumstances and situations. But is the supposition true? Who that ever heard an affecting story told in a small circle of friends, ever perceived any two affected alike? It is true, indeed, they all felt a melting and subduing influence, an influence that drew them nearer the hapless victim of woe: but were they all melted in the same degree? did all equally commiserate? Did all enter equally deep into the feelings of the distressed object, and all grasp equally alike the associations and images of horror that flitted round his mind, clouding all the rays of hope that gleamed through the sad prospect that lay before him? Yet, differently as they felt affected, they all felt naturally affected, because each felt the impression in exact proportion to his natural degree of sensibility, combined with his conception of the real state of the person described. But the diversity of modes in which they were affected could not be greater than the diversity of modes in which they expressed their feelings, as every mode of feeling assumes instinctively an expression of countenance peculiar to itself. If then all dramatic excellence consists in a close imitation of

nature, no two actors should act exactly alike, for we have here a group of natural actors who are all placed in the same situation, yet all act their part differently and naturally at the same time. But it may be asked, may not actors act alike, and express their feelings alike, when they are all placed in the same situation, and still act naturally? I reply confidently they cannot; and I would wish to call the attention of those gentlemen at the theatre, who endeavour to teach others to act like themselves, to attend to the arguments or reasoning by which I prove it, as it must convince them that all such acting is false and unnatural. Let any individual in this small group be supposed the most naturally affected among them, and let all the rest wish to appear just as much affected as he is, the consequence is, that those who possess less natural sensibility than he does, can never appear affected so deeply as he does, without forcing themselves into a passion of which they are incapable, and, consequently, without running into rant and fustian. We see at once that he who acts such a part as this acts a part that is not natural to him, that he affects a virtue which he does not feel. We see he is labouring to be pathetic, though it is not in his nature to be so. Instead, therefore, of stopping at the exact point where he wishes to stop, of imitating his model exactly, he generally goes beyond him and tears

the passion to rags ; for the moment a man is driven out of his proper element, and attempts to act what he is not qualified to act, he is set completely adrift, and, like a man hurried along by a tempest, he has not a leg to stand upon. Had he continued to act that part which he acted before he sought to imitate, he would not only act naturally, but, so perfect is the harmony that exists between natural passion and our sense of what is natural, that we should perceive instinctively the expression of his countenance to be nature itself. Hence it is obvious, that those who possess little sensibility always act unnaturally when they attempt to imitate those who possess more sensibility than themselves ; and not only that they always act naturally when they act in their own way, but also that we are pleased with such acting. I would be far from insinuating that an actor of little sensibility can ever attain to any eminence on the stage, whether he acts in his own peculiar way or attempts that of another ; but I maintain that it is only by acting in his own way that he can attain all that eminence of which he is capable ; for if he act otherwise he acts unnaturally, and if it be possible to act unnaturally and still attain to eminence, I have only to say that the public are no judges of good acting, and have no standard to be guided by if they abandon the golden standard of nature. In fact, though an

actor can never rise to distinction without possessing that natural sensibility which responds to every influence, a sensibility which can neither be infused by instruction nor caught by imitation; it is still possible for an actor of very unenviable talents to acquire more credit, and impart more pleasure to his auditors by following his own peculiar manner, than we could easily be made to believe if the truth was not confirmed by experience. The instance of William Peer, related in the *Guardian*, is the only one I shall mention, because one instance is as good as a hundred, where it is confirmed by public feeling. It is thus related in the eighty second number of that work.

“ Mr. William Peer, of the Theatre Royal, was an actor at the restoration, and took his theatrical degree with Betterton, Kynaston, and Harris. Though his station was humble he performed it well, and the common comparison between the stage and human life, which has been so often made, may well be brought out upon this occasion. It is no matter, say the moralists, whether you act a prince or a beggar,—the business is to do your part well. Mr. William Peer distinguished himself particularly in two characters, which no man ever could touch but himself. One of them was the speaker of the prologue to the play which is contrived, in the tragedy of *Hamlet*, to awake the consciences of the guilty princes. Mr. Wil-

liam Peer spoke that preface to the play with such an air, as represented that he was an actor, and with such an inferior manner as only acting an actor, as (that he) made the others on the stage appear real great persons and not representatives. This was a nicety in acting that none but the most subtle player could so much as conceive. I remember his speaking these words, in which there is no great merit but in the right adjustment of the air of the speaker, with universal applause.

For us and for our tragedy,  
Here stooping to your clemency,  
We beg your hearing patiently.

Hamlet says, very archly, upon the pronouncing of it, Is this a prologue or a poesy of a ring? However, the speaking of it got Mr. Peer more reputation than those who speak the length of a puritan's sermon every night will ever attain to. Besides this, Mr. Peer got great fame upon another little occasion. He played the apothecary in Caius Marius, as it is called by Otway, but Romeo and Juliet, as originally in Shakspeare. It will be necessary to recite more out of the play than he spoke, to have a right conception of what Peer did in it. Marius, weary of life, recollects means to be rid of it, after this manner :—

I do remember an apothecary,  
That dwelt about this rendezvous of death :  
Meagre and very rueful were his looks,  
Sharp misery had worn him to the bones.

When this spectre of poverty appeared Marius addresses him thus,

I see thou art very poor,  
Though may'st do any thing ;—here's fifty drachms,  
Get me a draught of what will soonest free  
A wretch from all his cares.

When the apothecary objects that it is unlawful, Marius urges,

Art thou so base and full of wretchedness  
Yet fear'st to die ? Famine is in thy cheeks,  
Need and oppression stareth in thy eyes,  
Contempt and beggary hang upon thy back ;  
The world is not thy friend, nor the world's laws ;  
The world affords no law to make thee rich,—  
Then be not poor, but break it, and take this.

Without all this quotation the reader could not have a just idea of the visage and manner which Peer assumed when, in the most lamentable tone imaginable, he consents, and delivering the poison like a man reduced to the drinking it himself if he did not vend it ; says to Marius,

My poverty, but not my will, consents :  
Take this and drink it off, the work is done.

It was an odd excellence and a very particular circumstance this of Peer's, that his whole action of life depended upon speaking five lines better than any man else in the world. But this eminence lying in so narrow a compass, the governors of the theatre observing his talents to lie in a certain knowledge of propriety, and his person permitting

him to shine only in the two above parts, his sphere of action was enlarged by the addition of the post of 'property man.'"

This circumstance in the life of Peer shews that minds of limited capacities are those which benefit least by the light of culture or the guidance of authority or precept. They see but a short way, and their feelings never stray beyond the horizon of their perceptions. Their homely feelings and perceptions may, therefore, be said to be better acquainted with each other than the more diversified feelings and perceptions of a man of genius; and this acquaintance produces so perfect a harmony, or familiarity, between them that they both seem to be cast in the same mould; and we instinctively acknowledge the correctness of that taste which suits, even in little things, "the action to the word, and the word to the action." Hence it is, that men of narrow parts have always something more fixed in their character than men of enlarged and comprehensive minds. They have a certain manner of thinking and of feeling, from which they seldom deviate; and the range of this commerce between the passive and active powers being so extremely limited, the same round of thought and feeling must frequently recur, and thus stamp a character for them, which is recognized after a very short acquaintance.

Will it then be said that Peer could have suc-

ceeded in this humble part better than he did, had he abandoned his own simple natural manner of acting and adopted that of some of his superiors? If so, why could none of his superiors equal him in this humble part? His excellence then evidently arose from his acting it in his own way. Had he followed another he could certainly do it no better than his original, which is saying, in other words, he could not perform it as well as he did, as none of his contemporaries could act it as well. But the fact is, he could not perform it even as well, for the reasons I have already mentioned. The person, then, whom I have selected from this little group cannot evidently improve his inferiors, because, by endeavouring to imitate him, they become ridiculous and unnatural, and it only remains to be ascertained whether he can improve those who possess more natural sensibility than himself, and who consequently enter more deeply into the feelings of the individual whose misfortunes are described.

Those who possess little sensibility are naturally cool and steady, from which they possess the power of viewing attentively the actions and manners of others. This close attention enables them, in a great degree, to imitate the external attitude and movement of body, though they cannot communicate to their attitudes and movements the same expression and feeling. A servant can bow



like his master, and imitate all his actions, but he neither knows the proper time and place, nor, if he did, could he communicate to them that inexpressible grace, that silent eloquence which beam in the lustre of speaking eyes and an intelligent countenance. So far then as regards mere external attitude, a man of little soul and little feeling can imitate, however incapable he may be of that grace and elegance to which refined taste and feeling can alone attain. There is another reason why a person of little feeling succeeds in the imitation of action. Exclusive of that attention which his coolness and callousness enables him to pay to form, he is not prevented by any retiring and bashful modesty, by any nervous and tremulous sensibility of feeling, from imitating his original as well as he can. If he fail he is not put to the blush, and, in general, he knows not whether he fails or not, because natural insensibility of feeling renders us also insensible of our errors and mistakes. It gives to pedantry the air of wisdom, and confers on measured action and measured tones the characters of thought and judgment. He, therefore, who has little sensibility of feeling may succeed in imitating the action, though not the expression, of those to whom nature has imparted it with a more liberal hand; but the latter has no chance whatever of imitating the former. The stoic may, by the influence of some powerful feeling, be occasion-

ally warmed to rapture, but the enthusiast can by no means whatever place himself in the situation of the stoic. When I say by no means whatever, I mean by no sudden means. Even death clothed in all its terrors cannot completely subdue and indurate an ardent mind. He may be terrified but he cannot be rendered insensible. He may affect insensibility;—he may look cool, grave, and religious, if some powerful cause obliges him to do so; but this affectation can impose on no man who has any knowledge of human nature. A sensible mind cannot endure constraint; it pants for its native liberty, and though it feels no desire to abuse it, it cannot endure the chains of ignoble servitude. We perceive instinctively the constraint which it is endeavouring to exercise over itself. It feels, instinctively, that it is debasing its own nature to assume the character and manners of a nature inferior to itself; while he who is conscious of his own inferiority, instead of feeling any conscientious scruples in imitating superior natures, thinks it the greatest happiness if he can succeed in the imitation. He feels himself ennobled at the moment, for we cannot even imitate virtuous and generous emotions without feeling a portion of their influence. Some of the best feelings of human nature may sometimes be awakened in the breast of an evil man, but the good man cannot descend in a moment and feel like a villain—*Nemo repente*

*fit turpissimus*. We are, therefore, so constituted by nature that refined and delicate feelings have an abhorrence to what is gross, while gross and hardened feelings never enjoy happier moments than when they are aroused by some momentary excitement, and become sensible of feelings which approximate them to more exalted and sensible natures. Hence, when any distressing scene is placed before us, or represented in description, as in the case which I have supposed, those who from natural insensibility of feeling are little affected, become strongly affected if they behold some individual of a sensible and sympathetic mind melted into tears by the same scene or relation. We are all, more or less, prone to sympathize with the sympathies of others, however insensible we may be by nature; whereas those who are naturally tender and sympathetic, instead of throwing off their sympathies, instead of ceasing to feel for the victim of distress, because they perceive others unmoved by it, only become more and more strongly affected. It is, then, contrary to the nature of the human mind for a man to resign his feelings because he sees others cool, whereas it is perfectly in accordance with our nature to be melted by the feelings of others, even though we cannot feel in the same degree. If those then who possess little sensibility, in the group which I have supposed, could not succeed in imitating and be-

coming as strongly affected as he whom I have made their model, it is obvious, from the reasons I have just assigned, that they would come nearer to him at least than those who possessed more natural sensibility than himself, because the natural progress is from little to great, not from great to little, sensibility. He who is overcome by grief and affliction cannot endure the idea of moderating his woe. On the contrary, he indulges and caresses it, and would despise himself if he thought himself capable of abandoning his sweet regrets, and becoming as cool and unconcerned as those around him. He looks upon them as cold, heartless, and callous beings, furnished indeed with the organs of sense, but organs that hold no intelligence with the understanding, no sympathy with the heart, or, more properly speaking, which have neither heart nor understanding to commune with them. If, then, it be less difficult to rouse us to mental energy, if it be more easy to excite than to congeal our sympathies, if we be more capable of being impressed with the feelings and emotions of others than of restraining the ardour of our own, and bringing them down to the coldness and indifference of those who are incapable of the warmer and tenderer affections ; it is, consequently, easier for him, who undertakes to instruct another in dramatic action and expression, to succeed in disciplining and improving those who have

less natural sensibility than himself, than those who tremble at every pore, and who feel without instruction all the affections and sympathies which the situations and circumstances in which they are placed are calculated to excite. He may succeed, in some degree, with the former, because he may awaken in them a portion of that feeling by which he is moved himself ; but the latter do not require to be roused, and as I have already shewn, they cannot be restrained without becoming unnatural. In fact, the ardent mind, the mind of quick sensibility, or at least its possessor, has an indelible contempt for him who would indurate that energy and flow of soul that enters into all the feelings of others, and sympathizes with all their sympathies, while the cold-hearted man, instead of contemning him whose affections and sympathies are warmer than his own, looks upon him, and has a secret consciousness that he is a being of an order superior to himself. If he cannot imitate him then, and feel like him, it is not because he contemns such feelings, but because he is totally incapable of them ; and, consequently, if he affect them, his action and expression is forced and unnatural.

Hence it happens that those who are most capable of excellence in some characters, have no chance whatever of succeeding in others, or of succeeding in any character of certain plays. Those

who possess quick and sympathetic feelings can never act mechanically, can never, like the cold insensible man, affect to feel when there is nothing to move him. If he has, therefore, to act a part where deep passion is to be represented without a sufficient cause to excite this passion, the natural delicacy of his feelings revolt from the affectation of a passion which there is nothing to excite. Yet he knows the audience will have it so, and that he must either whine and moan, and shed artificial tears, or be damned for his coldness and want of passion. And yet his coldness and want of passion arises from having too much real feeling, a feeling that vibrates and responds to every influence, but revolts from that hypocrisy which melts into tears without any cause for sorrow. In attempting, therefore, to express himself in the sad accents of woe, he runs into rant and vociferation ; and, both in action and expression, he is equally unnatural, because he does violence to the honesty of his own nature. Give him cause to be moved and he will respond to its influence : give him no cause and you will find it dangerous to rely upon him. In such a case trust to the coldest feelings rather than to his. Judge not then of the dramatic powers of any actor by his success in a particular play, for if it be cold, barren, and void of interest, if it require of him to get into a passion without placing him in those deep and affecting situations which are calculated

to excite passion, the more dramatic genius he possesses, or in other words, the more sensibility he possesses, the less can he excel. Of this we had a clear instance in Miss Kelly's *Constance*, in the *Vespers of Palermo*. This young lady is all soul and feeling, and until the quickness of her sensibilities are retarded by a long course of acting, she will never succeed in any character where a display of passion is required without any cause, or at least any sufficient cause to excite it. When I say without any cause, I am aware that our very worst writers of tragedy place their principal characters in very distressful situations; and so far, it might be supposed, there is room for passion; but this supposition is erroneous. Whoever has the least idea of consistency, instead of sympathizing with him who is placed in a very distressful situation, hisses him off the stage if he find him placed in it without necessity, or rather if he has not been driven into it either by the impetuosity of his own passions, or by a natural and regular chain of events. Nor can we even then sympathize with him unless his language shews that he is himself strongly affected by the situation in which he is placed. If it be said that we are not to know whether he be or be not; that our business is to sympathize with him when we find him in evil plight, I reply that sympathy is no matter of business, that it does not depend upon our will, and

that no man can feel the emotion called sympathy, however desirous he may be to feel it, unless he possess from nature a tender and sensitive mind, and is acted upon at the moment by some agency or circumstance fitted to awaken it. I reply, also, that we cannot help knowing whether he be or be not affected by his situation. "Out of the abundance of the heart the mouth speaketh," and he who is strongly affected by his situation cannot help expressing himself in a language indicative of his feelings. If, then, the writer make him speak the affected language of passion, instead of pouring out his soul in the genuine, spontaneous effusions of passion itself, we cannot sympathize with his pretended griefs: we look upon him as a hypocrite unworthy our commiseration. If, again, it should be objected that we should pity all men alike who are equally distressed, no matter how differently they may feel affected by their situation, I reply, we should not. The man who is placed in a perilous situation, but has, at the same time, too much stubbornness of nerve, or too much natural insensibility to be affected by it, is not a subject fitted to excite our sympathy. If it be asked why, I reply, because he is himself incapable of sympathizing in the woes of others; —because that callousness of feeling which renders him insensible to his own misfortunes, renders him also incapable of sympathizing or



feeling for the misfortunes of others. Insensibility in distress is a barbarous virtue: it is the virtue of a savage, and savages alone are noted not only for possessing but for displaying it as a virtue. It is true that many make a boast of it in civilized countries; but it should be recollected that there are savages in courts and colleges, while the fine thrill of generous sympathy frequently warms the devoted breast of the savage Indian—savage as we are pleased to call him, but savage however in name, not in nature.

If, then, the tragic writer places any of his characters in a very affecting situation, but still makes him speak a language which proves either that he is not affected by it, or only pretends to be, neither the audience nor the person who represents him on the stage, can sympathize in his distress; and without such sympathy the actor of fine feeling must inevitably fail. Of this Miss Kelly's Constance, to which I alluded above, affords a signal proof. Notwithstanding the success that attended her Juliet, she is supposed to have failed in Constance. This is a mistake; the failure was not her's but the author's. In her first appearance in the third scene, she and Raimond di Precida assume the character of lovers. But the history of their loves is totally concealed from us. The first time they were smitten with each other's affections, the manner in which the soft secret

escaped them, all the little jealousies, sighs, and tears, that follow in the train of Cupid, are carefully kept out of sight, and they are represented stark staring in love with each other all at once. Who can sympathize with such love? who can, without a moment's preparation, enter into the feelings of two ardent lovers without knowing how or where they became attached to each other? If the audience cannot, neither can those who personate their character. It is so contrary to nature not only to fall deeply in love in an instant, but still more to talk openly and undisguisedly of a passion formed so abruptly, that a delicate and sensible mind either shrinks from a task that does such violence to its nature, or if it attempt to accomplish it, runs, as I have already observed, into rant and extravagance. How natural is Miss Kelly in the character of Juliet, because there she is first introduced to Romeo, and neither of them openly declares their affection for the other, in the first interview. Their passion progressively and naturally increases, and so do also the sympathies of the audience. Without this natural progress and gradual disclosure of passion, the audience can never sympathize with it. If, then, it were possible for Miss Kelly to affect and represent naturally a passion which it was impossible she could feel in a moment, yet to the audience this natural representation of passion would appear complete rant,

because there is no shade or colouring of passion that ever swayed the human breast, or ever was represented on the stage, can affect an audience, unless it be so introduced as to make them feel it themselves. Without such a feeling every display of passion appears to the audience a mere farce, a burlesque, or caricature of nature. It matters not how natural the passion may be in itself, if the audience remain cool spectators of it; because this coolness makes it appear to them perfectly unnatural. Miss Kelly, therefore, in representing the warm and devoted lover, appeared to the audience to go beyond all just bounds, and to be more in love than she ought to be, simply because they were themselves at the moment, as cold as stoics; for instead of being warmed gradually to passion, they were required to fall in love at once, or rather to sympathize with a passion which, from its being so suddenly introduced, they had every reason to believe had no existence. It passed with them as mere cant and hypocrisy. Accordingly they begged leave to decline sympathizing with it. There is always *reason* in passion though it never reasons; or, in other words, we can never work ourselves into passion by any act of our own will, without some circumstance capable of moving us to it, and the perception of this circumstance is the reason we yield to its influence. No man can become angry with

another without a cause, let him wish it ever so much. There is therefore always some reason for it. Offer a man the wealth of the British empire for becoming angry with an innocent, good-natured man, who never offended any person, and he would find it impossible to enjoy the prize: there can be no anger where there is no provocation. It is so with all the other passions: not one of them depends on our will. No man ever fell in love by an act of the will. There must be some charm, either mental or personal in the object of our affections, or at least, we must fancy such; and a fancied or ideal charm exercises as powerful, and frequently a more powerful spell over the heart than a real one. If then passion does not depend upon the will, if there must be always an exciting cause, and if no cause or agency can excite, that does not appear to be natural, and if it be unnatural to appear deeply in love in a moment, and still more so to avow it openly, how could the audience be affected by that open avowal of passion which appears in the first interview between Raimond and Constance, admitting that Miss Kelly acted it naturally. But this is admitting an impossibility, for the same reason that prevented the audience from sympathizing in such suddenly avowed passion, prevented Miss Kelly also. The more alive she was to good acting, and to nature, the more difficult was it for her to represent

naturally what was unnatural in itself; for as I have just observed, passion does not depend upon our will, and unless the actor feel it, he can never represent it naturally.

Perhaps it may be replied, that the *dramatis personæ* never feel at all, that they know the woes and griefs, and loves, and sad regrets, which they describe are all imaginary; that there is, consequently, no real cause to affect them, and that their acting must, accordingly, be the pure result of art and study, of fixed and predetermined movements, attitudes, signs, gestures, and expression. If this reason be good, I would ask, why is the audience affected? They are just as well convinced as the actors themselves, that all is mere imitation, that there is no real distress endured, no real cause for passion or sympathy; and yet they sympathize, and yet they are moved—nay, often moved to tears. If, then, the audience be moved by imaginary distress, why suppose the actors incapable of being moved by it also. They are mere men and women, mere flesh and blood like ourselves, endowed with the same susceptibilities, capable of the same emotions, swayed, prompted, animated, deterred, encouraged, captivated, and enslaved by the same influences and agency; or, if there be any difference, it is that they are more susceptible of these influences than we are, for it is only the person of quick sensibility that will ever

succeed in depicting the woes and sympathies of others. That there is a great deal of art and study necessary in the minor, or mere mechanical departments of acting cannot be doubted, but the advantages arising from this study are merely those of conferring grace and elegance on every action and movement. Grace and elegance may be acquired by education, but the power of portraying the secret workings and emotions of the heart is "beyond the reach of art." Nature, and nature only can confer this power. It is the privilege of tender, sensible, and sympathetic minds who are moved by the slightest appearances of distress and pain. In comedy there is not a particle of sympathy required : on the contrary, the more sympathy, the greater is the danger of not succeeding in it. There is a virtue allied to sensibility which but ill sorts with the levity of the comic muse ; but as it is possible to be gay and playful, and witty without the sacrifice of any virtuous feeling, as there is " a time to laugh as well as a time to cry"—as we may jest at the foibles or mishaps of others, and yet so express our jest as to deprive it of every appearance of malignity, or insensibility, so it is also possible for a tender, sympathetic mind to excel in comedy where it is only playful and innocent. Tragedy, however, is the great field where the softer and sympathetic affections can display all their powers, if placed in deep and affect-

ing situations, and left to express their deeper tones and expressions of sorrow in their own natural way; for the very attempt to imitate another's hills that keep sensibility which is the soul and inspirer of all good acting. In all imitation, except the imitation of nature, there is trick and art; and this very trick and art extinguish that feeling and passion which alone can lead to excellence in Tragic Representation. It is thought that the lady of whom I have just spoken, has benefitted little by the lessons she has received at Covent Garden; and if she has received such lessons there can be little doubt of their evil effect, except where they are confined to the inferior or ornamental parts of acting. But the expression of passion cannot be taught and appear natural at the same time. A studied, mechanical movement of the features is easily distinguished from the expression of nature, as might be frequently remarked in the late Mr. Kemble. It is true that the passion of love throws all who are its victims into nearly the same attitude of body and expression of countenance: "the head," as Mr. Burke describes it, "reclines something on one side, the eyelids are more closed than usual, and the eyes roll gently with an inclination to the object, the mouth is a little opened, and the breath drawn slowly, with now and then a low sigh, the whole body is composed, and the hands fall idly to the

sides ;" but let any person who knows love only by name, put himself into this position ; let him roll his eyes, half close his mouth, &c. and compare him with another who is not only in the same position, but who is actually in love, and you will instantly perceive how widely the works of art stand removed from those of nature. Without feeling what we describe, or being affected by it, we may roll our eyes to eternity, but will never appear like him whose eyes are rolled not designedly but through the unconscious influence of passion. Miss Kelly, however, so far from having any thing studied or affected in her manners, appears to me a much more natural describer of the softer passions and melting sympathies of the heart than Miss O'Neil. She does not possess, it is true, equal excellence in those parts where feeling and passion are not required, but this is only a stronger evidence of her dramatic genius ; for excellence in the unimpassioned parts is the result of art and long experience, and may be acquired by very inferior performers, whereas it is doubtful whether any great performer ever excelled in them. Who has ever surpassed Kean in displaying the stronger and more turbulent passions of the mind, and who fails more where there is neither passion nor emotion to inspire him. " It is singular," says the author of an essay on the dramatic genius of Kean, in *Blackwood's Magazine*, " that Mr. Kean,



who has nearly banished the mock-heroic from our stage, should be the very person who at times exhibits the most of it. In fact, this is his grand fault. He frequently gives what is called the *level speaking* of a part, in a style that would not disgrace an amateur theatre or school-room. It is difficult to account for this. The practice itself is no doubt to be attributed to early habits; but how it happens that he has not yet reformed it we are at a loss to guess. Give him something to do and he does it better than any one else could, but give him nothing, and he makes worse than nothing of it. There are parts of almost every one of his characters that he *mouthes* even worse than 'many of our players do.' "

These observations are true, but they leave the mind dissatisfied, as the critic acknowledges his inability to account for Kean's not being able to reform his early habits, or in other words, for his failure in those parts which require no passion. This appears to me easily accounted for. No man ever excelled in things of no importance who was calculated for great things. The mind bent on the accomplishment of some great object, directs all its powers to its attainment. It keeps its eye continually fixed upon it, and overlooks all the petty insignificant objects which it meets in its course. These objects, however, are those which the niggard, unambitious mind pays most attention

to, for finding itself unable to grapple with things of greater magnitude, it withdraws from the attempt and directs all its little powers to the little objects which are placed within its reach. The mind which takes in an extensive prospect, and spurns the contracted views of short-sighted intellect, can never form so intimate an acquaintance with any individual object that moves within it, as he who confines his attention to a point. Hence all men of genius are found extremely deficient in little things. They carry no small change about them, and, therefore, appear simpletons in matters with which little minds are intimately conversant. He who excels in portraying the deeper and intenser passions, looks with perfect indifference on those intermediate and connecting parts which have neither value nor importance in themselves, and serve only as links to bind the more interesting parts together. No man is a greater fool, or at least, at greater loss in chit-chat conversation, than a man of genius, but introduce some important subject, and he glows with all the energies of inspired intellect. It is exactly with the tragic writer of genius as with the tragic actor : " give him nothing to do and he makes worse than nothing of it," or, to speak more plainly, he fails in those intermediate parts which are the mere links of the drama,—parts which have no interest in themselves, but which are still indispensable,

as there could be no unity of design or action without them. Who is more wretched than Shakspeare in the parts to which I allude. If Shakspeare, says Lord Kaimes, in his *Elements of Criticism*, "upon any occasion fall below himself, it is in those scenes where passion enters not: by endeavouring in that case to raise his dialogue above the style of ordinary conversation, he sometimes deviates into intricate thought and obscure expression." As an instance of this observation Lord Kaimes quotes the following specimen,

They clepe us drunkards, and with swinish phrase,  
Soil our addition; and, indeed, it takes  
From our achievements, though performed at height,  
The pith and marrow of our attribute.  
So oft it chanches in particular men,  
That for some vicious mole of nature in them,  
As in their birth (wherein they are not guilty,  
Since nature cannot choose his origin.)  
By the o'ergrowth of some complexion  
Oft breaking down the pales and forts of reason;  
Or by some habit that too much o'erleuens  
The form of plausible manners; that these men  
Carrying, I say, the stamp of one defect,  
(Being nature's livery or fortune's scar,)  
Their virtues, else be they as pure as grace,  
As infinite as man may undergo,  
Shall, in the general censure, take corruption  
From that particular fault.

*Hamlet, Act I. Scene 7.*


If Shakspeare, then, has failed in the secondary parts, where there was no room for passion, no

agency to excite it, no wonder that Kean has failed also, and that in these parts he endeavours to substitute *stage effect* for nature.

If, then, a great actor can only excel where great passion or emotion is excited, what greater proof can we need that the excitement of strong sensations, emotions, and passions, is the soul and origin of Tragic Pleasure. But this tumultuous agitation of mind must not be excited in a moment; the feelings of the audience must be gently and insensibly won to sympathy and passion, and whoever flatters himself with an opinion that he can rouse them in a moment, will find himself as much deceived as Mrs. Hemans, in her *Vespers of Palermo*. It is true, indeed, that the cold, heartless monotony of Mrs. Bartley,—her drawling, whining, declamatory tone would be sufficient to damn any play; but it is equally true that no dramatic power could redeem it. What surprised me most was to find that notwithstanding her intolerable tameness, some critics seemed to think that she acquitted herself better than Miss Kelly. It is certain that no two could differ more; but it is equally certain that whoever prefers the former has as much taste for dramatic representation as an ancient stoic. I would sooner trust to the frozen feelings of old Diogenes in his tub, than to such a critic. In the first place, Mrs. Bartley cannot excite the slightest sensation, emotion, or pas-

sion in any of her auditors, without which it is idle to talk of Tragic Pleasure. Some may be ignorant enough to admire her formal strut and measured action, but whoever pretends to be pleased with her is either a hypocrite, or the dupe of his own imagination. Miss Kelly's only fault consisted in affecting to be a violent lover the moment she appeared on the stage, and the audience, always true to nature, refused to sympathize with so sudden, and, consequently, so unnatural a passion. But what alternative remained for her? The language of love was put into her mouth, and she must either reject it and frame a speech for herself, or suit her action and manner to the warmth of her diction. It is true, indeed, that she wants the tragic powers of Kean,—and that confidence in herself which can only be attained by long experience: she wants those daring energies and that madding riot of dramatic genius in which he so eminently excels; but she exerts as great a power in her weakness, and exercises as absolute a dominion over the heart and its affections in her retiring and yielding sensibility, as he does in all his strength. He excites terror, she excites sympathy: these, according to Aristotle and the critics, are the legitimate objects of the drama. The countenance of Kean assumes, it is true, a great variety of expression, yet it has always more of a stern, obstinate, and command-

ing, than of a tender and sympathetic character. Perhaps it may be thought, that this energy of soul is of a higher order than the softer and tenderer affections. If this be so, it must depend on the meaning we attach to a mind of a high order, for it certainly is not of a more virtuous and endearing character, virtue itself being only another name for mildness, sweetness, goodness, and sensibility of mind. That this is a fact can be easily proved from the conduct of mankind in general. Who is it the world most esteems, the man of a strong, uncompromising, unbending spirit, or the man of fine and yielding sensibility? to which of these characters would we entrust all the secrets of our heart? Which of them would confer on our darker moments the sweetest repose? Certainly no man acquainted with human nature will hesitate to say the latter. Burke justly observes, that "those virtues which cause admiration and are of the sublimer kind, produce terror rather than love, such as fortitude, justice, wisdom, and the like. Never was any man amiable by force of these qualities. Those which engage our hearts, which impress us with a sense of loveliness, are the softer virtues;—easiness of temper, compassion, kindness, and liberality, though certainly those latter are of less immediate and momentous concern to society, and of less dignity. But it is for that reason that they are so amiable.



The great virtues turn principally on dangers, punishments, and troubles, and are exercised rather in preventing the worst mischiefs than in dispensing favours; and are, therefore, not lovely though highly venerable. It is rather the soft green of the soul on which we rest our eyes, that are fatigued with beholding more glaring objects.

Perhaps this attachment to the softer virtues of humanity may be supposed to arise from the general weakness and frailties of human nature: perhaps it may be said, that we love those who are weak because we are weak ourselves—*paret*, it will be said, "*cum paribus facile congregantur*;" but who will trust to the truth of this assertion, when he finds that those very men whose virtues are of a stubborn and energetic character, find themselves less happy with men of their own stamp than with those who possess the weaker and softer virtues. They are called weak, however, only because they assume that appearance, for in reality they arise from a real though secret greatness and strength of mind. On this subject I could say much, but all I could say would be little better than an echo of what Mr. Knight has said of it in his "Principles of Taste." I shall, therefore, rest the strength of my observations on the following extract from that work.

"Neither is the yielding pliability of a mild and gentle temper to be considered as a mental

weakness, though often called so : for, to comply or yield with ease, dignity, and propriety, requires more real energy of mind, than can be displayed in any stubbornness and obstinacy of resistance : since that sort of stubbornness or obstinacy, which rests upon no principle of reason, honour, or integrity, is like the restiveness of a mule, nothing more than sullen stupidity. Hence fools are almost always ill-tempered ; and generally sulky and obstinate ; while persons of very enlarged minds, and very vigorous understandings, are, as generally, good-tempered and compliant." " Thus it is that men, who lead armies, and govern empires, with the utmost vigour and ability, are in their own families often governed by their wives, their mistress, or their children :—*That humour some boy, said Themistocles, pointing to his infant son, governs Greece ; for he governs his mother, his mother governs me, I govern Athens, and Athens governs Greece.*

" Persons, on the contrary, of really weak characters, are always tenacious and opiniative in trifles : for, as their little vanity feels itself interested in maintaining any opinion which they have once advanced, the more insignificant the object, and the more absurd the opinion, the more obstinately and violently will they contend ; since the greater is the humiliation of confessing, and the shame of retracting error."



“ Whatever tends to exalt the soul to enthusiasm, tends to melt it at the same time : whence tears are the ultimate effect of all very sublime impressions on the mind ;—as much of those of a joyous, as those of a melancholy cast :

————— my plenteous joys  
Wanton in fulness, seek to hide themselves  
In drops of sorrow —————

says the benevolent Duncan, on contemplating the prosperity of his kingdom, and the happiness and filial attachment of his subjects. Every generous, as well as every tender feeling of sympathy, when it reaches a certain pitch of rapture and enthusiasm, relieves its fulness in tears.”

The department of acting, therefore, in which Miss Kelly excels, is not less interesting, less attractive, or in reality less potent in the influence which it exercises over the heart, than the more daring and terror-inspiring energies of Kean ; but she wants his experience, and the confidence that naturally arises out of it. A young performer can never be brought too frequently on the stage, an old one should appear as seldom as possible. If Kean, for instance, retired for twelve months from the stage, he would only return to it with renewed confidence. “ Practice makes perfect,” is an old saying, and once perfect the habit becomes a second nature to us. Kean could therefore experience no want of confidence from appearing less

frequently, whereas he would evidently acquire great, very great advantages from it. The feelings, blunted by continual acting, would have time to recover their natural sensibility and original powers, which, when combined with that judgment and experience which he already possesses, would lead him to the greatest height of excellence. How different is the case with young performers. What chiefly leads to their failure is want of confidence; and confidence can only be acquired by appearing frequently on the stage, by making them familiar with their audience. Their sensibility, at the same time, stands in no danger of being dulled by repetition: it is as yet too green to feel the chilling cold of insensibility. To me it appears doubtful whether many have not more confidence in their first performance than they have in many of their subsequent ones, if they appear but seldom: for if they succeed in their first appearance, the trepidation of feeling that arises from the laudable ambition of supporting their acquired fame, produces a nervousness and restlessness of mind of which they were totally unconscious in their first essay; and the more conscious they are of their own powers, the more strongly are they affected by this mental agitation, for it is the same sensibility that leads to excellence in dramatic action that induces this anxiety

and trepidation of mind. Were they incapable of this feeling they would be equally so of that excellence which they are so ambitious of obtaining. This affection, however, can only be removed by a frequent appearance on the stage; and if I mistake not, Miss Kelly would far surpass her predecessor, Miss O'Neil, if she appeared more frequently before her audience. In saying so, I am influenced by two motives, the one a sense of duty to the public, the other of duty to herself.

Be thou the first true merit to befriend,  
His praise is lost who waits till all commend.

But when we recommend real merit to public notice, whom do we serve most, the individual possessing it or the public? The latter, certainly; for the former promotes the happiness of thousands, while they can only make him happy in return. It is, therefore, a duty which every writer owes the public, to direct its attention to those who possess energies of mind, which, when efficiently applied to their proper objects, tend either to promote the enjoyment of life, or improve the intellectual and moral faculties. When Miss Kelly first appeared at Covent Garden, in the character of Juliet, I went to see her, and communicated the result of my observations to the editor of the *European Magazine*. I cannot, therefore, give my opinion of her Juliet better than in the lan-

guage of the feelings which she inspired at the moment. I cannot, however, give it in the original state, as the editor omitted some parts of it.

In the balcony scene, where Romeo first sees Juliet in private, she seems to be no imitator of the unhappy fair—she is Juliet herself—she appears the sad victim of the passion she represents. When Romeo says,

“ — Alack! there lies more peril in thine eye,  
Than twenty of their swords.”

The wistful gaze of undissembled passion arrests all her faculties. Her eyes, which in the latter scenes seem to wander with a heavenly distraction, and to be every where and no where, are now immoveably fixed on those of Romeo, and drink the delicious poison of love. They seem not to rest upon, but to devour their object.

When she pronounces the words

“ Well, do not swear.”

her eyes, her countenance, her every feature, claim forgiveness for having required of him to swear to the fidelity of his attachment, while she seems, at the same time, to inhale the soft and enchanting intoxication of love. Her “ sweet love, adieu,” and her “ good night, good night,” were still more enchanting, more enthusiastic, more lovely, more infatuating. In pronouncing these syren exclamations, her very soul almost

appeared in view. It seemed to come forward and converse in her countenance; and so it did, so far as feeling can embody the invisible, and inconceivable nature of the mind.

Her interview with the Nurse, in the second act, is exquisitely performed, and the mere reader of the play can have but a very inadequate idea of the beauty of this scene—her eagerness to meet the Nurse, whom she fondly hails as the harbinger of joyful news, and her exclamation,

“ O heaven ! she comes.”

fills every heart with participating expectation; while joy, mingled with fear and apprehension, is strongly portrayed in her countenance. Though joy would seem to be predominant, yet she dreads to become acquainted with the fearful tidings. In the third act, where the Nurse returns, and leads her to suppose that Romeo has been slain, we never saw, indeed we never conceived, even in idea, so exquisite an image of enraged innocence. When she cries out—

“ What devil art thou that doest torment me thus,”

the furies seemed seated on her brow: every feature was pregnant with rage, but yet it was rage without a sting. She soon expiated, however, the crime of becoming an infuriate; and presented us with the finest picture of repentance and self-reproach that imagination can conceive.

In the garden scene, in the third act, where she endeavours to convince Romeo that it is not yet day, in order to detain him, she surpasses all her predecessors. He, who could hear her without emotion repeat the following words, when Romeo is in the very act of parting from her, must have drank the milk of tigers in his infancy.

“ O heaven ! I have an ill-divining soul :  
 Methinks I see thee, now thou'rt parting from me,  
 As one dead in the bottom of a tomb ;  
 Either my eye-sight fails, or thou look'st pale.”

Miss Kelly's chief excellence evidently consists in the delineation of the deeper and intenser passions. If we mistake not, however, her natural manners are of a more gay and playful character than those of Miss O'Neil, and consequently we think her more likely to succeed in comedy than her predecessor. Her action is natural and unembarrassed : every movement seems to arise from the impulse of the moment, though her attitude is not perhaps always so imposing as Miss O'Neil's. The cause seems to be, that Miss O'Neil threw more of her own mind and intellectual conception of character into her action, and consequently was partly guided by her feelings, and partly by her reason ; but Miss Kelly seems not to reason at all ; she is the mere creature of the influences by which she is acted upon. She would seem never to have considered how she ought to act in any particular

situation, but permits herself to be carried away instinctively by the influence which the situation exerts over her at the moment. What she loses, therefore, in dignity she gains in sweetness, artlessness, and nature. There is no influence lost upon her, for she responds to the slightest impulse,—the highest excellence in dramatic representation.— Art and study only serve to counteract or suppress the divine enthusiasm of nature: the eyes no longer speak the eloquent language of love, no longer brighten with hope, or languish with despair. Every movement is marked with affectation, and every attitude is constrained and unnatural. The truth of these observations never, perhaps, has been more triumphantly illustrated than in the fair subject of the present memoir. We never saw the secret workings of indomitable love more powerfully displayed, or more ably sustained throughout. Her characteristic excellence seems to consist in giving expression to the different emotions, which naturally arise at the same instant from the opposite influences by which she is acted upon. A secret foreboding of her unhappy fate throws a browner shade over her happiest and most animated moments, so that even her joy seems mingled with melancholy musings. This is an excellence of difficult attainment, and Miss Kelly seems to have made it her particular study. She has studied it, however, only from

her own feelings, for in real life, whenever human nature is acted upon by different influences, they excite that tumultuous crowd of emotions, which confine themselves not to the heart, but manifest their existence in the expression and agitation of the countenance. This strong tide of mingled emotions is not merely to be found in the action and expression of this lovely actress ; she seems to have the same command over her voice that she has over her passions, affections, and sympathies."

I must now take leave of my readers. There are many other questions connected with the subject of Tragic Representations and Tragic Pleasure, which I intended to treat of here, most of which regard the dramatic writer more than the dramatic actor, as the fable, manners, sentiments, diction, unities of action, time, and place, &c. ; but having, since the work went to press, undertaken the Editorship of the European Magazine, I find its duties render the completion of my intentions impossible at the moment. I shall, however, have frequent opportunities, through the medium of that work, of completing my original design.

THE END.



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Nec rude quid prosit videq; ingenium, alterius sic  
Altera poscit opem res, et conjurat amice.*

HOM.

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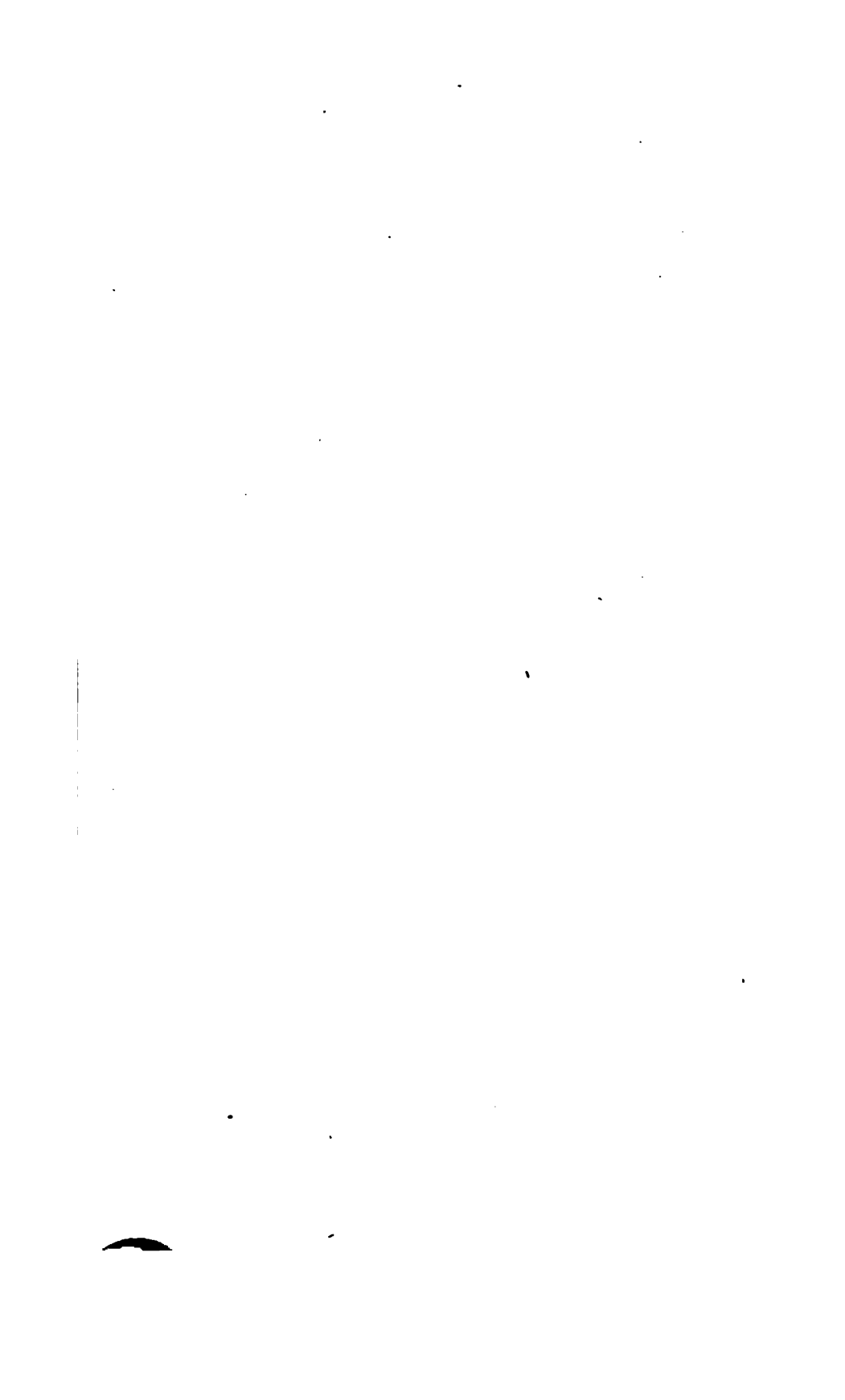
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